

**“By
amicable
agreement”**

Anti-Semitism and National Socialist Jewish Policy in the Villach District

**Translated into English by
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Foreword

Dear Reader,

Thanks to the project *“By amicable agreement”: Anti-Semitism and National Socialist Jewish Policy in the Villach District*, we as a city now have a closer insight into a difficult chapter in our recent history. We men and women of Villach are renowned for refusing to shy away from addressing even the most uncomfortable of issues – let me remind you, for instance, of the anniversary exhibition *“Heiß umfahdet, wild umstritten”*, that we mounted in 2005. Our city is not afraid to call things by their true names, however unpalatable they may be. We do this to raise awareness of the ways in which problematic, utterly unacceptable events can be subjected to detached, critical scrutiny; we do it to enhance public sensitivity towards new political developments; and we do it to so that with the help of the past, we can ensure that nascent racism, violence and inhumanity are nipped in the bud, now and for the future. It is in this spirit that we support the work of the Remembrance Association and that we were fully involved in bringing to fruition the powerfully haunting “Memorial of the Names” in front of our City Museum. The publication that you have in front of you documents a series of deeply moving encounters with persons who survived the horror of those times. Some of them managed to escape to safety in foreign countries, where their descendants still live today. Their life stories and their memories must not be swept under the carpet. There can be no justification whatsoever for crimes against targeted groups of the population being cloaked with silence, much less with oblivion.

Reclaiming this lost episode in our history is a project that matters greatly to me personally, because the Jewish population was very much a part of our city, before they were expelled and murdered by National Socialists - who were of course very much part of us too. This publication aims to retrace the steps of those people and to make visible their pathways through life, to raise awareness amongst today’s generation of the terrible fate of those men and women of Villach who, from one day to the next, found themselves demonised – denounced and expelled by people who had in many cases previously been their neighbours, or acquaintances.

The editors have carried out their researches into contemporary history with exemplary thoroughness and they have now presented and documented their results. Congratulations to everyone involved, and above all to Dr. Werner Koroschitz and Mag.^a Alexandra Schmidt, for demonstrating such empathy, expert knowledge and professionalism in handling this sensitive topic. Dear readers, I invite you to engage with the themes of this book and to engross yourselves in reflection on its subject matter

Helmut Manzenreiter

Mayor of the City of Villach

Preface

The by-ways of remembrance as a road to self-discovery

In February 2012, on the initiative of Mayor Helmut Manzenreiter, Villach Municipal Council resolved to commission a study of the fate of the Jewish men and women who lived in the Villach district. The Villach Remembrance Association was entrusted with this project. We

would like to take this opportunity cordially to thank the Villach Municipal Councillors, as well as Mayor Helmut Manzenreiter, for the confidence they placed in us. It is not least a reflection of our successful co-operation over many years.

A serious academic study investigating the destinies of Villach Jews in the 20th century is not something that we should take for granted. Until the final decade of the last century, this chapter in the history of the City of Villach, in which many of our mothers and fathers were involved - sometimes culpably - had never been publicly discussed. The silence of the wartime generation was for a long time also our own silence, and for decades remembrance of the victims of the National Socialists had been beset by a range of taboos that, even today, are not yet completely behind us. For descendants it was, and still is, obviously very difficult to accept fathers' and mothers' active involvement in the Nazi terror regime, to acknowledge the guilt, complicity and responsibility of forebears, to talk about it and publicly to admit it.

The distance in time that stands between us and those historical events, the consequent replacement of an earlier generation with a later one, and processes of social transformation have all contributed to a change of perspective over the intervening years. So it is easier for us today to look at these events with a critical and self-reflective eye. This is very much to be welcomed, because post-War society's culture of silence, concealment and oblivion, does not at all help us to come to terms with episodes from the past that are also part of our own history.

It is only over the last thirty years that nationwide remembrance initiatives, outside the traditional victims' associations and rooted in a spirit of social engagement, have begun to focus upon the victims of National Socialism. This has of course also been happening in Carinthia and in our own City. The beginnings of the Villach Remembrance Association lie within this same time-frame. In co-operation with the *Verein Alpen-Adria- Alternativ* (cultural association) and historian and author Andrea Lauritsch, the first, extremely important pamphlet was produced under the title *Wo ist dein Bruder – Novemberpogrom 1938 (Where is your brother – November Pogrom 1938)*. Three years later appeared the book *Nationalsozialismus in Villach (National Socialism in Villach)*, published by the Villach Remembrance Association. There followed remarkable exhibitions and publications commissioned by the City of Villach, all of which made a lasting impact on the culture of remembrance across the whole of Carinthia. I particularly recall the exhibition *Heiß umfehdet, wild umstritten. Geschichtsmymthen in Rot-Weiß-Rot (Hotly disputed, fiercely contested. Myths of Austrian National History)*. It was mounted by the Association for Industrial Culture and the History of Everyday Life in 2005 and it focussed not only on our National Socialist past but also on our problems in coming to terms with that past during the Second Republic. A year later followed *Der Onkel aus Amerika (Our Uncle from America)*, a special exhibition dealing with the themes of 'escape' and 'migration' in the context of National Socialism. Both projects broached the question of Carinthia's deeply-rooted anti-Semitism, in connection with the destiny of the Jewish men and women of Villach.

Since the turn of the millennium a very gratifying paradigm shift in the Carinthian culture of remembrance has become apparent - despite countervailing trends in overall political life. Across practically the entire Province, initiatives have been established with the support of civil society at large. In their different ways all of them have been about tracking down the evidence and beginning to research your region's National Socialist past. Allow me to offer you a brief overview of these remarkable developments – not least because they were only

possible thanks to many years of dedicated, mostly voluntary work, in the face of strong political headwinds.

So, in 1995 the “Loibl Pass, North” Memorial Initiative was established under the aegis of Professor Peter Gstettner, of Klagenfurt University, to remember the Loibl Pass “external camp”, which was built in autumn 1943 as an offshoot of Mauthausen concentration camp. Fifty years after the end of the War, a ceremony aimed at Austrian visitors was held to commemorate this Carinthian concentration camp for the first time. Since then there have been annual ceremonies to remember camp inmates, who were put to work building the Loibl tunnel and who lost their lives – dying either on-site or at Mauthausen camp. Those suffering from illness or physical exhaustion were picked out by the Klagenfurt camp physician Sigbert Ramsauer and were then transported back to Mauthausen to be murdered.

1995 was also the year when the Villach Remembrance Initiative commenced its work. Four years later the original “Memorial of the Names” was erected in Widmannngasse (street), to commemorate the Villach victims of the National Socialist reign of terror. Since then annual commemoration ceremonies have taken place there; and from 1996 the Association, in co-operation with schools and churches, has also arranged ceremonies for remembering the November pogrom of 1938.

Since 1982 the Carinthian Partisan Association/Zveza koroških partizanov has been commemorated at a bilingual museum at Peršmanhof near Eisenkappel/Železna Kapla. Its theme is the history of Carinthian-Slovenian persecution and resistance, as well as one of the last Nazi war crimes on Carinthian soil, committed on 25th April 1945 against Carinthian-Slovenian civilians, among them seven children. Thanks to the establishment of the Društvo/Verein Peršman inter-cultural association in 2001, the Peršmanhof memorial site and the Partisan Association gained support from the younger generations. Over the course of the intervening years they have been in charge of a comprehensive educational outreach programme. The extension and redesign of the museum in 2012 not only resulted in a significant rise in the number of visitors, but the Province of Carinthia also began increasingly to recognise the relevance of Peršmanhof as an educational facility for contemporary history.

Particularly over the past five years or so, a great variety of commemorative monuments have appeared in the public sphere right across Carinthia. For example in 2007 a memorial plaque was unveiled at the Khevenhüller barracks in the Lendorf district of Klagenfurt, to commemorate the fact that another of Mauthausen’s “external camps” was located there from 1943 to 1945. Again the Rosegg/Rožek Remembrance Initiative created a “Memorial of Names” in Rosegg in 2010, commemorating local NS victims, whose fate was documented in an accompanying scholarly publication. On the initiative of the Kuland Cultural Society, working with contemporary historian Peter Pirker, a memorial created by the artist Hans Peter Profunser was erected in Greifenburg in the Upper Drautal – here too accompanied by a publication investigating the region’s NS victims. The “Memorial Kärnten/Koroška” Remembrance Initiative installed a commemorative plaque at the Klagenfurt Provincial Court in 2013, ensuring that all those men and women sentenced to death in that building during the Nazi era would be remembered. Over the last two years, and following the concept of artist Gunter Demnig, the same Remembrance Initiative has also laid down so-called “stumbling block” memorials in Klagenfurt, in front of the last freely chosen places of residence of expelled or murdered Jews. To date more than 45,000 of these “stumbling blocks” can be found set into the pavements of seventeen European countries. Since 2011 a

Remembrance Initiative has also been active, focussing on the National Socialist past of the Gailtal valley region. A first publication detailing the results of its investigations has recently been printed. In September 2012 a commemorative plaque for two women resistance fighters was unveiled in St. Veit in Jauntal valley/Šentvid v Podjuni. This was on the initiative of Adele Polluk, a teacher at Villach Technical High School, who had spent her youth and childhood in the village. Again, in Villach in June 2011 the Klagenfurt Unikum together with the Villach Alpine Association, the Association for Industrial Culture and the History of Everyday Life and the Villach Remembrance Association, organised the campaign *Hausbergverbot am Dobratsch* ("local mountain ban, on the Dobratsch"). During this event, the Villach Section of the Alpine Association fitted a memorial plaque at the Dobratsch summit house, commemorating the fact that in 1922 a board had been erected there bearing the legend "Jews are not permitted to enter".

All the life-stories and destinies that have been investigated, documented and recounted as part of the Initiatives listed above have one thing in common: all of them are firmly anchored in their specific local historical space, at the very scene of the events, whilst also exhibiting strong links with the present. This is also very much the case with the publication in hand. It is always necessary to produce a sense of the spatial and personal proximity of the past, to keep memories alive and so facilitate critical self-reflection.

There are people today who look out for the traces of the past and stumble upon traumatising places where lives were violently extinguished: at Peršmanhof, or on the Loiblpass, at the Gau hospital and the Khevenhüller barracks in Klagenfurt, at the Prisoner of War camps, as well as at the various places of execution, most of them now overgrown, and all too literally dead and buried. Places like the Gestapo prisons and the police guardrooms, courts and every possible public authority body; places of humiliating discrimination, such as the summit house on the Dobratsch, or the Villach Peraugymnasium grammar school, where in 1933 the Jewish mathematics teacher, Ernst Singer committed suicide in the conference room, because he could no longer bear his colleagues' anti-Semitic attacks; the *Parkhotel* Villach where it was prohibited to serve Jewish men and women customers or even to allow them to enter. All these real places and the past events associated with them are particularly powerful *lieux de mémoire* (borrowing Pierre Nora's concept), because even now they are still part of our everyday life.

Preserving from oblivion what happened at these very different places and transferring these events to active memory is of crucial significance for our democracy: not only so that we can learn lessons for our present and future conduct, but to discover ourselves along the by-ways of remembrance.

Hans Haider
Villach Remembrance Association

Introduction

Over the decades, Jewish men and women made their mark on the cultural-, business- and everyday-life of the city of Villach and its surrounding area. By the beginning of the 20th century and, in their quest for better opportunities, many of them had already yielded to the pressure to assimilate and had been baptised. Or had *not* done so. Some were religious; others were *not*. Some practised charitable acts, whilst some did *not*.

In any case, they felt themselves to be equal citizens - and that is just what they had legally become under the Austrian Constitutional Law (Staatsgrundgesetz) of 1867. Many risked their lives during the First World War and participated in the Carinthian border struggles of 1918/1919.

In essence, their social, political and public positions reflected those of the great majority in Carinthian society. Across the political spectrum they ranged from Social Democrats, to supporters of the Liberals and Christian-Socialists and to the “Greater-Germany” camp. Their social standing spanned the ranks of workers and industrial magnates.

Jewish men and women from the Vienna bourgeoisie predominantly settled in the tourist communities around Lake Wörthersee and Lake Ossiachersee, which constitute part of greater Villach. They enriched the life of the rural round with the flair of the metropolis. In the process they also promoted the interests of the holiday resorts and they helped the cause of these communities as they developed their prosperity.

In consequence, our depiction of Jewish life does not begin with the National Socialist takeover of 1938; rather it starts with the influx of Jewish immigrant families, predominantly from the poorest Crown Lands of the Monarchy. Associated with this influx were anti-Semitic activities, which in Carinthia were remarkably radical in character long before 1938.

March 1938 nevertheless had a dramatic impact on the Jewish population of Carinthia. It began with their social isolation and denial of social rights as well as expropriation of Jewish property, and ended with their relentless expulsion and annihilation. In March 1938 around forty Jewish families comprising more than a hundred individuals resided in the Villach District, either as their main place of residence or as their second home. In the eyes of the National Socialists they were now classed as either “Jews” or “related to Jews”. *Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden (From Neighbours They Became Jews)* is the apt title of a published work by Hazel Rosenstrauch. In it she highlights the process of segregation – starting with fellow humans being redefined as “Jews” and continuing up to their deportation.¹

Discrimination and profound public humiliation were marked features of everyday-life for Jewish people in Carinthia even before 1938 - just as relentless expulsion and persecution were from 1938 onwards. These experiences seared themselves deep into the memory of the survivors and their descendants. Bidding farewell to friends, violent loss of family members, escaping from the homeland and struggling to survive, either in exile or even within Austria: all this left deep wounds that could scarcely be expected to heal. It was just the same in the long, long post-war period that simply never seemed to want to come to an end. There was the conspiracy of silence within a culprit-society; the former National Socialists who suddenly wished that they hadn't been, the Party members, the veterans returning from combat, the whistle-blowers, the onlookers, the profiteers and the opportunists. Once the War ended, they swiftly closed ranks again under the slogan “Heimattreue” (loyal to the homeland) and as a tight-knit community they remained firmly entrenched. They pretended not to remember how Jewish neighbours and acquaintances had been denounced, how they had been driven out of their houses and businesses, how

their dwellings had been demolished and how their assets and all their belongings had been seized by those who after 1945 claimed that all had been acquired “by amicable agreement”. Liberation from National Socialism by the Allies did not mark the end of anti-Semitism in Austria. The few Jewish people who returned home were treated with unconcealed suspicion and open hostility – and this at all levels: in their neighbourhoods, by the local authorities, and in politics.

In May 1946 during the course of the Allies’ denazification efforts, the re-education film *Die Todesmühlen (Death Mills)* was shown at the Klagenfurt Volkskino (public cinema). The audience greeted with jeers and shouts of “bravo” the information that thousands of concentration camp inmates had died even after the War, from the effects of their imprisonment. And a scene in the film showing marching Hitler Youths was received with sustained applause. Lawful demands by Jewish survivors for the return of their plundered property were met with renewed anti-Semitic gestures. The value of expropriated assets was denied and claimants were accused of greed and hatred. Using all available pretexts, people turned against the provision of assistance to the victims, which was freely referred to as a “gift to the Jews” extorted by the Israelite Religious Community using blackmail.² In 2001 the Kärntner Heimatdienst (Carinthian Homeland Service) demanded “Stop der Sühneleistungen” (put an end to reimbursement)³. Even ten years later, in 2011, one-in-two Austrians endorsed the belief that “the international business world is dominated by the Jews”, every fifth Austrian wanted to have politicians who would “speak out against Jewish influence”, and twelve percent thought that “it would be better not to have any Jews in the country”.⁴

In light of the fact that anti-Semitic attacks and infringements have lingered on uninterrupted since the post-war period, it is hardly surprising that many Jewish survivors and their descendants either preferred to remain silent about their experiences during the Nazi era, or turned their backs on Austria for good.

The following reconstruction of Jewish life-stories is based on a broad range of source materials collected from Austrian and international archives. The information provided by the Holocaust Memorial Archive in Washington, the Leo Baeck Institute in New York and the Yad Vashem Archive was just as essential as that provided by the Austrian State Archives, the Styria Provincial Archive, the Archives of the Jewish Religious Communities, the Carinthian Provincial Archive, as well as the City of Villach Museum. The work in hand has been augmented and complemented with valuable chapters by a variety of guest authors. Interviews with survivors and their descendants gave access to crucial experiences and personal insights that could not have been reconstructed using officially compiled documents.

In many cases the life stories could only be retraced in fragmentary fashion, because the necessary data was incomplete or no longer available, or because access to relevant material was refused for legal, data protection reasons - for example City of Villach registration data. In individual cases and for personal reasons, the decision was taken on behalf of some who were once persecuted, to refrain from mentioning their life-stories here. As regards the use of people’s names in this publication, on the whole we have generally decided against anonymity. However, if the personal details and feelings of the once persecuted victims are to be presented to the public, then of course the same has to apply to their antagonists. Almost seventy years after the end of the Second War, and with the relevant actors both male and female no longer alive, this seemed sensible and appropriate. Not in the sense of making personal accusations, rather this was intended as an awareness-

heightening reminder: the catastrophe that was National Socialism did not burst in from the outside world, but it was part of us and part of our own (families') histories. National Socialism was in fact not inhuman, but quite the contrary – with all its greed, its malevolence, its envy, its hatred and its cruelty - it was an extremely human phenomenon.

Here, a puzzle consisting of the destinies of many people has been assembled to form a single overall picture. The main purpose of this work was to give (to restore to) those persecuted in greater Villach a name, a face and a personal story - although this is done in shameful acknowledgement that it comes seventy years too late.

Werner Koroschitz & Alexandra Schmidt

¹ Hazel Rosenstrauch, *Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden. Ausgrenzung und Selbstbehauptung 1933–1942*, Berlin 1988.

² *Kärntner Nachrichten*, 27. 1. 1956, p. 1.

³ See *Der Kärntner*, Ausgaben von Juli bis Dezember 2001.

⁴ See Maximilian Gottschlich, *Die große Abneigung. Wie antisemitisch ist Österreich? Kritische Befunde zu einer sozialen Krankheit*, Vienna 2012, p. 35.

Migration and Integration

Jewish life before 1918

FIRST TRACES

In the Eastern Alpine region the so-called Judendörfer (Jewish villages) are amongst the most conspicuous trace of the Jewish past. These villages were Jewish trading posts and their locations mark the line of the paths from Italy into the North. This series of trading posts starts in Judendorf near Villach and runs via Judendorf near Maria Saal, to Judendorf near Friesach, and from there to Judenburg in the Province of Styria. At that point, the route divides, turning off on one side to Salzburg and Regensburg via Judendorf near Tamsweg, and then on the other side the trade route extends to Judenau near Tulln, by way of Judendorf near Steyr.

In Judendorf near Villach the Jewish past can be traced back to the High Middle Ages, which (roughly) means the period between 1050 and 1250. Archaeological excavations in the 1930's on the so-called Judenpichl to the west of Judendorf brought to light a number of Jewish graves. On the archaeological evidence, it has not yet been possible to establish for certain whether this amounted to a separate settlement, or if this was merely a Jewish graveyard outside the town.

What can be proved is that Jewish people had residences in the town from the 13th century. They lived in the Kaiser-Heinrich district, in today's Freihausgasse area, where besides a Jewish school there also used to be a synagogue.¹

As in other towns, the Villach Jewish community lived in a separate residential district, which provided the social, cultural and religious infrastructure that they needed. One reason for their concentration in a designated quarter was the policy introduced in the 12th century, of establishing spatial boundaries, separating the Jewish from the Christian population. Segregation and stigmatisation were the overriding aims of a whole raft of orders promulgated on the part of the Church. Amongst these was an obligation for the Jewish population to wear distinctive clothing and headgear. In connection with this, the colour yellow was assigned to them for the first time. During the entire Christian Middle Ages this colour served to designate a very varied range of marginal groups.

The stock of anti-Jewish prejudices ranged from accusations of having put Christ to death, desecration of the Eucharistic host and well-poisoning, to ritual murder of Christian children. This Christian anti-Judaism repeatedly led to violent persecution of the Jews across the course of history, even continuing after the end of the Shoah (Holocaust). So, on 4th July 1946 over forty Polish Jews were murdered and another eighty Jewish survivors of the Shoah were injured in the Polish town of Kielce. This pogrom was triggered yet again by rumours of Jews abducting and murdering Christian children. In 1338 an allegation of Jews committing sacrilege against the host had also sparked a pogrom in Wolfsberg in the Lavanttal valley. According to a contemporary document, it resulted in seventy fatalities. The final outcome was the expulsion of the Jewish community.

Johann von Viktring, a 14th century historian, provides us with a vivid description of the pogroms in the German-speaking world, specifically referring to the one in Wolfsberg: "In the years in question, persecutions of the Jews took place all around the different regions: in Austria, Bavaria, Carinthia, on the Rhine and in other German areas. They

robbed the Jews of their treasures, their property and their books; they even drowned or burned them, or flung them down from high places; they tore the intestines out of the body and let them perish miserably. In various places the local princes looked after them as best they could, but Christ took revenge. For, in a certain town in Austria, which is called Bruck, as well as in the city of Wolfsberg in Carinthia, the Jews pierced a consecrated host that had been handed over to them. When eventually drops of blood came forth, they brought torches and burned it.”²

In 1348/49, Wolfsberg was again the setting for violent anti-Jewish riots. According to contemporary Hebrew sources, there were also persecutions of Villach Jews during the same years.³

The growing hatred towards the Jews amongst the majority population resulted from a variety of political factors; it was skilfully fuelled by the clerical and secular élites. Besides religiously motivated demonization, the rigorous implementation of rules limiting access to a range of professions significantly contributed to the social exclusion of the Jewish population. For instance, they were not allowed to join the guilds, which saw themselves as Christian associations of artisans.

This situation forced the Jewish minority into an economic specialisation in trade and money-lending, since the latter was still forbidden to Christians for religious reasons. As financiers to the feudal lords and cities, and as wholesale traders, Jewish people soon acquired a reputation for being “rich profiteers”. In the process they also became a tempting prey in any political conflict. Debtors in particular evinced a strong interest in getting rid of the Jews, and, with them, of their own debts too. Consequently the Jewish population was dependent on the good will of the political élite, or at least on their possession of a “residence permit”. Usually they purchased the permit, the so-called “Judenschutzbrief” (letter guaranteeing protection of the Jews), from the relevant secular and ecclesiastical lords, by paying “Judenregal”, a special levy.

Towards the end of the 15th century Jewish life in Carinthia shuddered to a halt for the time being: under pressure from the Styrian and Carinthian Landstände (the medieval provincial estates’ assemblies), in 1496 Emperor Maximilian issued an edict of banishment against the Jewish minority.

All the usual stock of anti-Jewish prejudices was used as a pretext for the expulsion. However, according to historian Wilhelm Wadl, the Emperor was predominantly motivated by fiscal interests. On this view, Maximilian was very keen to find a new asylum in his domains for the “host desecrators”, “child murderers” and “forgers”. This would allow him to cash in not just once but twice - once from the provincial assemblies for the expulsion of the Jews, and a second time from the émigrés for their resettlement.⁴

With the gradual relaxation of the clerical prohibition on usury that prevented Christians from lending capital and charging interest, many Jews experienced a significant decline in social status because of increased competition from Christians.

As a consequence of economic and social developments, the Jewish population predominantly became an impoverished minority. Still, the stereotype of the “rich Jew” has persisted to the present day.

In any case between the 15th century and the second half of the 19th century, there were hardly any Jews in Carinthia. In the 18th century Enlightenment ideas eventually effected a change in attitude amongst Europe’s educated bourgeoisie: now the view was taken that the

Jews could be integrated into Christian society, provided they brought with them a certain amount of willingness to adapt.

These considerations also left their mark on Joseph II's "Patents of Toleration" of 1781-1789, where he encouraged basic school education for Jewish children and opened up access to higher schools and universities.

Special taxes levied from Jews were abolished, clothing regulations and curfews were lifted, and religious freedoms were granted, as was freedom to trade. Now the Jewish population met with a certain degree of toleration, quite how much, admittedly, depending on each Jewish person's willingness to integrate.

Against this, discussions aimed at relaxing the settlement ban on would-be Jewish immigrants hardly won any support. The Carinthian Landstände rejected possible "tolerance", on the grounds that local industrialists and tradesmen might go to the wall because of Jewish competition.⁵ Nevertheless, they took a positive stance on Jewish participation in Carinthia's annual markets, because they hoped for lower prices and higher toll revenues.

In Austria it was to take until 1867 before the Jewish population was granted fully equal civil rights. Only after that date could Jews choose their own place of residence with full autonomy. And it was in the same year in Carinthia that they were also allowed to purchase landed property. With the Staatsgrundgesetz (Austrian Constitutional Law), enacted in 1867, the hitherto enforced personal restrictions on Jews were formally abolished. From that date began an admittedly slow but steady migration into Carinthia, with Jewish families and individuals coming from all parts of the Habsburg Monarchy.

FROM THE SHTETL TO THE "DRAUSTADT" (colloquial name for Villach)

In the 19th century extremely few inhabitants of the Habsburg Monarchy had any clear idea about the eastern peripheries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as the Crown Lands of Galicia and Bukovina.⁶ If anything, they had a vague stereotyped perception of these places as being in the grip of poverty, misery, dirt, illiteracy and drunkenness. At the end of the 19th century, the Eastern European world of the Jewish Shtetl, which in later recollections was often nostalgically idealised, was above all regarded as the Habsburg Monarchy's poorhouse – a multi-national and cultural melting pot where social problems and national conflicts were the order of the day.

Yet, the central government in Vienna was neither interested in managing the political and social conflicts, nor in economic investment. Galicia especially was considered a source of inexpensive raw materials and a market for cheaply manufactured industrial goods.⁷

More than 800,000 people of Jewish origin lived in Galicia alone at the end of the 19th century; of these about 600,000 lived in Eastern Galicia. The proportion of Jewish people corresponded to about ten percent of the total population.⁸ The focus of Jewish life was the Shtetl. Each community numbered between 1,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, most of whom were Jewish. Their everyday life was dominated by what tended to be traditional religious rituals and customs, as well as by the Jewish calendar.⁹ Yiddish was the common vernacular, although it was not the official language.

Joseph II's "Patents of Toleration" came into effect in most of the Crown Lands between 1781 and 1789 - in Galicia in May 1789. They formed a basis for the social integration of the

Jewish minority but they also served Joseph II's own political objectives. Above all he wanted to have real control over the Jewish population.¹⁰

In his book *Juden auf Wanderschaft (Jews on the Move)* Jewish author Joseph Roth gives a remarkable picture of the world of work in his 19th century Galician home town, Brody:

"The town has 18,000 inhabitants, of whom 15,000 are Jews. (...) 8,000 of the 15,000 Jews rely on trade to make a living. They are keepers of small shops, medium-sized shops and big shops. The other 7,000 Jews are small artisans, workmen, water bearers, scholars, officials of the Jewish religious community, sextons of synagogues, teachers, writers, Torah scribes, Tallit (prayer shawl) weavers, physicians, lawyers, clerks, beggars and shamefaced paupers who live on public charity, grave diggers, circumcisers and gravestone carvers."¹¹

The Austro-Jewish social worker and activist for women's rights, Bertha Pappenheim, wanted to get her own picture of the situation of the Jewish population. So, in 1904 she travelled across Galicia together with the Russian economist, Sara Rabinowitsch. This is what she said about the many Jewish traders:

"We so often hear anti-Jewish statements claiming it as a fact that 'the Jews usurp trade', and this is said in such a way that outside observers might easily get the impression that a large proportion of the Jewish population acquires great riches and lives in abundance. Apart from what is relatively speaking a tiny number of wealthy merchants, the Jews in Galicia who make their living as traders are among the poorest of the proletariat that can be found anywhere in the world. I have repeatedly been assured that the earnings of many fathers of families are just enough to buy the weekly Sabbath bread and the Sabbath candles."¹²

The high-density concentration of Galician Jewish traders was to have fatal consequences for their living and working conditions towards the end of the 19th century. Competition amongst themselves as well as with Christian traders was continually on the increase. Moreover, the building of the railway between Vienna and Krakow boosted the trackside towns, whilst the smaller Shtetls became much less important, because their markets were less frequented. Many Jewish traders lost their livelihood, because of this change. In addition, the Jewish communities' strict religious standards and people's actual way of life were becoming increasingly incompatible. In the long term this was leading towards disintegration of the Shtetls' traditional order – a Jewish culture dominated by religion was now in decline.¹³

Overpopulation, poverty and the increasing decay of stabilising and traditional influences towards the end of the 19th century, especially within the Jewish communities of Galicia and Bukovina, led to a variety of refugee movements. At the intellectual-political level many took refuge in the ideas of Chassidism¹⁴, Zionism¹⁵ and Socialism, since the political agitators behind these movements promised a way out of misery, and into a new and better world. Yet, the draw of faraway places was a primary motivation for the tens of thousands of Galician Jews who moved abroad, to *Eretz Israel* or to other Austrian Monarchy Crown Lands. Reform of the Staatsgrundgesetz (the Austrian Constitutional Law) in 1867 separated out civic and political rights on the one hand, from religious confession on the other. This paved the way for Jewish families legally to settle without restriction, in any part of the Monarchy.

The very existence of this wanderlust implies that these people had reached out in their thoughts beyond the confines of everyday Shtetl life and that they had some inkling of other possible living environments and cultures.¹⁶

Around 1900 America in particular seemed to promise a paradisiacal life: newspaper adverts and posters seduced people into emigration, as did the many agencies that received a per capita commission for each individual prospective emigrant recruited.¹⁷

It was apparently not uncommon for the Jewish women to promote the emigration process, because, by virtue of their position at the heart of the family, they were anxious to improve its material living conditions. The life of Orthodox Jewish men was usually focused on religious matters and the study of the Torah. By contrast, access to religion for women remained blocked by traditional gender-specific ways of thinking. So, they had to work in the outside world to earn the family's livelihood. Because they were less fully caught up with religious-traditional matters, it was apparently easier for them to disengage themselves from deeply rooted social structures.¹⁸

As a rule an upsurge in Jewish migration was triggered by traumatic events. This was the case in 1881, for example, when the murder of the Russian Tsar Alexander II resulted in a nationwide pogrom against the Jewish population. In the years that followed, thousands fled Russia to escape on-going persecution of Jewish people. They crossed the border to Galicia, where initial sympathy for the refugees soon gave way to rejection and anti-Semitic resentment, in light of the locals' own social and economic problems. Many Russian refugees, but also quite a number of Galician families, subsequently left the country. Anyone who would not or could not move to America in those days usually traipsed from village to village, as a beggar or day-labourer, or they tried their luck right in the heart of the Habsburg Monarchy. Towards the end of the 19th century many Jewish migrants settled in Vienna's Second District, Leopoldstadt, which as a result became known colloquially as "Mazzes Island" (after the traditional Jewish bread).

For a number of people though, Vienna represented only a stopping off point on their longer journey to other regions of the Monarchy. And Carinthia too was amongst the new immigration destinations. From the 1880s it had attracted its first Jewish families. They came not only from Galicia and Bukovina, but also from Western Hungary, Bohemia and Moravia. A second wave of Jewish refugees started to arrive from 1898 onwards. This time it was Galicia that was directly affected. In early summer of that year, anti-Jewish riots had unsettled the western part of the country. These riots had been preceded by famine across broad tracts of the country. As various rumours circulated - for example that the Jews were planning an attempt on the Emperor's life - all the anxiety, frustration, and deeply-rooted religiously-motivated anti-Judaism erupted in the form of overt violence. The riots, essentially initiated by Polish farmers, were directed mainly against Jewish innkeepers and traders.¹⁹ The 30th June 1898 issue of *Arbeiterwille* (newspaper) offered this clarification:

"In Galicia the Jews are the middlemen between the exploiting major landowners and schnapps manufacturers, and the horribly exploited farmers who are poisoned by the disgusting local liquor. In their capacity as village usurers and by selling liquor, the Jews are in direct contact with the farmer, whilst the Count only pockets the profits. It is obvious that in circumstances like this, the poor Jewish population, who are blameless and who are themselves starving are also made to suffer, when the farmers' fury erupts - and this is all because the priests, gentry and the capitalists intentionally keep the Polish farmers in the dark."²⁰

In the following period came a surge in Jewish emigration from Galicia. In Carinthia alone, the rate of Jewish migration tripled during the first years of the 20th century. Between 1900 and 1910 the number of Jewish people both male and female officially living in Carinthia increased from 212 to 341.²¹ However the unofficial number may have been appreciably higher, because some people did not publically declare their religious faith. When the Russians invaded Galicia at the beginning of the First World War, the third great wave of Jewish refugees started. However, it gradually declined over the course of the War. The influx of refugees was now particularly concentrated on Vienna, whilst a mass migration to Carinthia failed to materialise. The increase in the number of Jewish migrants in Carinthia was, above all, the result of family members still living in Galicia now being brought to the Province by relatives who already lived there. Within this context, immigration from the regions of the former Monarchy continued until after the First World War, and well on into the 1930s.

WORKING LIFE

Jewish immigrant families were generally given a hard time by the local bureaucracy of their new home towns. As a rule, the authorities were less familiar with the traditional Jewish nomenclature that derived (amongst other things) from religious/ritual marriages, within the Jewish communities. As Joseph Roth wrote:

“This man is going to demand documents. Unlikely documents. Christian immigrants would never be asked for such documents. Besides, Christians’ documents are always perfectly in order. All Christians have European names that are comprehensible. Jews have incomprehensible Jewish names. As if that were not enough, their family name consists of two and sometimes three falsely linked names [ie under “false” Jewish Law] as opposed to one rightful name [ie under “rightful” State Law]. One just never knows what to call them. Their parents were only married by a Rabbi. So the marriage is not legally valid.”²²

It is not recorded whether trader Philipp (more properly Efraim Fischl Lilian) from Stanislau in Galicia and his Hungarian wife, Lina (more properly Liba, née Hauslich), were confronted with this kind of problem when they settled in Villach in 1909, but it is very likely. In any case, during the following years the couple was listed only as “Philipp und Lina Lilian” in address registries and other documents.

Joseph II’s endeavours to accelerate the assimilation of the Jews did not stop there in terms of its impact on Jewish nomenclature. Amongst other things, the “Patent of Toleration” of 23rd July 1787 also included a prohibition on names taken from the Hebrew language and forced the Jewish population to adopt a “German” surname that was not in common usage. Since they were not always allowed freely to select their own names, many Jews were at the mercy of officials, who selected names at random, sometimes even issuing anti-Semitic names. Names such as “Leibschmerz” (bellyache), “Veilchenduft” (aroma of violets) and “Erdenjammer” (earthly lament) are testimony to just how humiliating this nomenclature was.²³ Rather than resulting in Jewish assimilation, unsurprisingly this kind of naming process provided new grounds for discrimination. Not the least of its dramatic consequences was that the later Nazi regime was able to use those specific, stigmatising names for identifying its victims.

The prohibition on names taken from the Hebrew language was at first mostly ignored by the predominantly religious Jews from eastern parts. This particularly applied to forenames. But in the course of the assimilation process, some Jews adapted their Hebrew forenames to the circumstances of their new lives. For example, the state railway official Leib Aron Zwerling, who had arrived as a migrant in Villach in 1900, without further ado renamed himself by contraction Leon Zwerling.

There is documentary evidence that particularly around 1910 there was in Villach a high concentration of Jewish, but also non-Jewish, immigrants from the eastern parts of the Habsburg Monarchy.²⁴ The construction of the Karawanken Railway (1906) and the Tauern Railway (1909) enormously increased Villach's significance as a rail traffic junction. The railway network expanded, workshops and businesses belonging to the railway were set up and the "City on the Drau" (as Villach is known) was chosen as the site for the state railway headquarters. All this boosted demand for railway personnel, and with it came new job opportunities.

Amongst the many state railway employees who came to Villach during the years of expansion were a number of Jews. The majority of them were employed in the higher grades, as engineers or administration officials and some came on a short term basis, whereas others settled for good. The *Kärntner Wochenblatt* (Carinthian weekly newspaper), was a mouthpiece for the "Alldeutsche" (Pan-German Party); as early as October 1905, it caustically observed "even the state railway administration is doing its bit for the Jewification of our city".²⁵

Yet, the expansion of the state railways not only led to the immigration of Jewish railway employees; it also served more generally to attract traders. A census carried out in 1910 reported fifty-two Jews living in the Villach District, of whom at least ten families or individuals earned their livelihood from self-employed work.²⁶

August Samaja from Trieste/Italy had an establishment on Burgplatz, and then, on Postgasse, there was Albert Melli from Ferrara/Italy, both of them in the timber business. Leopold Blau, who was born in Pressburg in 1874, became a Villach resident in 1904. After his marriage to Elsa Rosenberg from Graz, he and his wife opened a general store at Weißbriachgasse 12 in 1910. In the 1920s this store expanded and became a subsidiary of the Viennese company *Elba – Leder- und Stoffbekleidungs GmbH* (Leather and Fabric Clothing GmbH). During this time two other families established themselves as general store keepers in Villach – the Fischbach and Lilian families; both had Galician origins.

Brothers Osias and Moritz Fischbach moved to Klagenfurt at the beginning of the 20th century, because other family members were already established there. But in 1909 Osias and his wife Mina along with their sons Ferdinand and Rudolf moved on to Villach. Moritz and his wife Amalia, together with their sons Leopold and Josef, did the same in 1912. By no later than 1920, the Fischbach families had three businesses in Villach: Osias and Mina owned a shop for manufactured goods and miscellaneous household articles, which was located at Erzherzog-Eugen-Straße 2 (today's Italienerstraße). After returning from the First World War, Moritz Fischbach opened a footwear and clothing shop called *Kaufhaus zum Eisenbahner*, which was located at Lederergasse 12. His wife Amalia also ran a wholesale rag-and-bone shop, at Nikolaigasse 37. The shop was a kind of predecessor of the modern recycling centre, processing rags to make paper and bones for glue and fertiliser. On account of the risk of anthrax infection, this line of business was a niche in which economically and socially marginalised groups had traditionally been able to ensure

themselves a livelihood.²⁷ The range of goods and the prices offered in those Villach businesses run by Jewish families to all appearances targeted the broad masses, rather than addressing an upmarket clientele. In an interview Leo Fischbach stated that the majority of his father Moritz's and his uncle Osias' customers were railway workers' families. Offering the option of payment by instalments, the shopkeepers had made it much easier for these families to manage periods of economic hardship.²⁸

From the 1920s at the latest, the steadily growing Jewish portion of Villach's population followed a broad spectrum of different professions. Apart from traders and business people, there were officials, doctors, lawyers, factory owners as well as artisans. Their financial circumstances ranged from bare subsistence to genuine prosperity. Essentially this corresponded to the range of social circumstances amongst Villach's non-Jewish majority population.

RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THE COMMUNITY

In Klagenfurt the Jewish community was numerically larger. From the end of the 19th century something like a distinctive social self-awareness gradually developed amongst the Jewish families. It was a reflection of their independent associative and community life. In 1887 the Israelitischer Kultusverein (Israelite Religious Association) was established, and a year later it was followed by *Chewra Kadischa* (Holy Society), which was a traditional form of Israelite association concerned with supporting the sick and burial of the dead.

In 1890 an Israelitengesetz (Jewish Law) was enacted. One of its stipulations was that any new Jewish Religious Community needed a minimum of 300 members, or at least 100 members who were legally of age. This requirement, for the time being, blocked a proposal to establish a separate Israelite Religious Community based in Klagenfurt. In 1893 Carinthia's Jews affiliated themselves to the Graz Israelite Religious Community (IKG). Then, in 1922 the continued efforts of the Klagenfurt Jews finally paid off. On 10th November 1922 the Carinthian Israelite Religious Community (IKG) was founded under the presidency of Praeses Max Stössl and his deputy Adolf Preis; Ignaz Hauser became the Community's first Rabbi and teacher of religion.

This kind of Jewish solidarity did not exist in Villach, where a stronger tendency towards assimilation was recognisable. As far as is currently known, only Philipp Lilian along with Osias and Moritz Fischbach became members of *Chewra Kadischa*. Whether and in what ways they actively engaged in the Klagenfurt Jewish Religious Association or later on, in the Carinthian Israelite Religious Community (IKG) is unknown. A number of members of the Jewish minority avoided declaring themselves "Israelites", so as not to be liable to pay contributions to the IKG in Graz.²⁹

The House of Prayer on Platzgasse in Klagenfurt had been purchased in 1905 by *Chewra Kadischa*. To what extent Jewish families from Villach who were not registered IKG members also used it is unclear. There are few records available and overall they point to individuals deciding for themselves. This is what Leo Fischbach, born in 1909, reported:

"We only visited the Klagenfurt Synagogue on Jewish holidays, such as New Year, Yom Kippur, and so on. The Klagenfurt Rabbi was actually supposed to come to Villach to see the Jewish children so that he could give them religious instruction, but he didn't turn up. He only came to my Bar Mitzvah."³⁰

By contrast, Leo Lilian, who was ten years younger, reported that for a while he and his brother went to Klagenfurt every week to attend religious education classes.³¹ However, owing to the lack of documentary sources, it is not possible clearly to establish the degree of intensity of Jewish faith and tradition in everyday life in Villach. In all probability, part of the Jewish community in Villach practised religious rituals only on the major holidays, such as Yom Kippur and Pesach, and on such occasions as weddings and circumcision-ceremonies. But on the other hand, some people practiced religion in greater depth on a day-to-day basis. The families who had come from Galicia were generally regarded as more religious and, at least in the early years, they may well have insisted on following Jewish customs and rituals.

Yet, in the course of the ubiquitous process of assimilation, Yiddish gradually disappeared from everyday speech and with it also certain rituals. The same applies to observance of the Sabbath. It was maintained less and less strictly, because it was difficult for Jewish business proprietors in Carinthia to reconcile it with their professional life.

In Villach, it was practically impossible for Jewish families to run a kosher household, because in the "City on the Drau" there was not a single slaughterhouse - nor a butcher - that slaughtered animals according to the Jewish ritual. Kosher meat was only available in Klagenfurt, from Abraham Chaneles, who was cantor and butcher for the Jewish Religious Community; later it could also be obtained from the Rom butcher's shop.

In the everyday life of most Jewish families and over the course of time, it can be presumed that there developed a co-existence between Jewish and Austrian traditions. Fritz Reinisch, who grew up in Klagenfurt, had this to say on the subject:

"Although my mother ran a kosher kitchen, she didn't mind me eating Wurstsemmel (sliced sausage in a roll) when I wasn't at home. This led my young contemporaries to mock 'Reinisch, the kosher Jew, certainly likes the taste of traife [non-kosher] sausage'."³²

Even though no institutionalised Jewish life existed in Villach, a certain degree of community spirit was still noticeable amongst the openly Jewish families. "People got to know one another and from time to time they also met up", Leo Fischbach stated when asked about the Jewish community in Villach. As in Klagenfurt, there was a high concentration of Jewish families and shops on certain streets – for example the Klagenfurterstraße (today's Italienerstraße), on Kirchenplatz square and on Weißbriachgasse. Lower rents in these areas may well have had a role to play, as August Walzl has pointed out in relation to a similar situation in Klagenfurt.³³ Undoubtedly, however, the need for a shared identity, social contact and mutual support were also key factors, especially in the face of a constantly growing and always detectable anti-Semitism amongst the non-Jewish population.

JEWISH SOLDIERS IN MILITARY SERVICE

In April/May 1933 a case of defamation came before the Villach District Court. Dr. Marcell Glesinger, a Villach lawyer, stood in the dock. The plaintiff was Dr. Richard Zirngast, also a lawyer resident in Villach. Zirngast accused Glesinger of having given offence by calling him an "ill-mannered lout" during a trial they had attended together. This had been preceded by an anti-Semitic remark from Zirngast, which had been an insult every bit as offensive. "I am not a member of your filthy race", was what he had said to Glesinger.

After the trial, excerpts from Glesinger's closing address were printed in the *Villacher Zeitung*, with the newspaper adding its own anti-Semitic commentary. This extract makes it abundantly clear just how bruising the atmosphere was for the Jewish population as early as the beginning of the 1930's:

"No anti-Semite can have the slightest idea what we Jews have to suffer. I've always been a good Austrian. I've fought at the Front and I've done whatever I could for my homeland; I've won five awards and as a Jew with a national consciousness, (Is there any such thing? Note from the apprentice typesetter.) I've always done everything in my power not to be provocative. As a lawyer it has been my concern to be a credit to my profession. My insulting reply was only made in the heat of the moment. I could not demand satisfaction from a sixty-one year old man, as if he were a student. (That would have been refused by Dr. Zirngast anyway, since he is an Aryan. The editorial office.)"³⁴

Marcell Glesinger was granted a full discharge by the court. The lawyer had only moved to Villach with his wife Sophie in 1933. In his pleading he was able to give voice to thoughts and feelings shared with many other Austrian Jews who had fought as soldiers in the First World War.

Prior to 1788 the state regarded Jews as "unfit for military service". However, only "professing Jews" were covered by this exclusion. Baptised ethnic Jews were commonly accepted and could embark on the career path of an officer. What was seen as the greatest obstacle, from the state's perspective, was that military service was incompatible with Judaism's strict religious rituals, for instance observing the Sabbath and provisioning with kosher food. Indeed, at the end of the 18th century the Hofkriegsrat (the Habsburg Monarchy's Court Council of War) gave consideration to the idea of assembling special units of Jewish troops so that their religious conventions could be catered for. Yet this compromise would have been inconsistent with the policy adopted by the Emperor and his reformers. They wanted the integration of the Jewish minority and would on no account support formalising their separate religious identity.³⁵

Yet with the extension of the Empire to incorporate the Crown Lands of Galicia and Bukovina – with their high-proportion Jewish populations - the cards were reshuffled. The state saw this as an excellent opportunity to use military service as means of better integrating and subordinating the Jews. Accordingly, on 18th February 1788 Joseph II decreed that "Jews are also fit for military service and; to begin with they should be used as hauliers, then moved on to the artillery as gun attendants, and immediately sent on campaign in the current war".³⁶ At first this edict only referred to Galicia, but on 4th June the same year it was extended to cover all the Crown Lands. In the process Austria became one of the first countries across the whole of Europe to open up military service to its male Jewish population.

In 1790 Joseph's successor, Leopold II had indeed made it possible for Jewish conscripts to buy themselves out of military service by paying the sum of thirty guldens. But when the Napoleonic Wars started he hastily rescinded this measure. What's more he extended the remit of Jewish military service to allow use of all categories of weapons. Best current estimates suggest that between 1793 and 1815 more than 35,000 Jewish soldiers served in the Imperial army.³⁷

The Staatsgrundgesetz (Austrian Constitutional Law) was enacted in 1867, and it granted full equality of rights for all citizens, irrespective of religion. The obligation to undertake

compulsory military service that followed in 1869, now of course also applied to Jewish men. Research conducted by military historian Erwin A. Schmidl has found an above-average number of Jewish soldiers serving as medical staff, and in administration. Working in these areas, if any, would probably have made it possible for their religious conventions to be taken into consideration. The high proportion of high-school and university graduates who were Jewish helped to ensure that there were in turn many Jewish military officials. These findings are completely consistent with the situation we encounter in Villach, between 1885 and 1918. The IKG Graz registers confirm that in that period several Jewish regimental doctors and military officials were based in the Villach District, on either short- or medium-term postings. Among them was the physician, Dr. Siegmund Alles, who was attached to the 12th Uhlan Regiment, Dr. Gustav Stein, who was a general medical officer, whilst Bernhard Hausmann, served as an Oberleutnant Chief Accountant.³⁸

At a conservative estimate, some 300,000 Jewish soldiers served in the Habsburg armies during the course of the First World War.³⁹ The very fact that over seventy rabbis served in the field and in the front line illustrates the scale of Jewish participation. In Villach there was hardly a Jewish family that did not send at least one son to war - and sometimes even a female member of the family too. Several of those Jewish war veterans were subsequently awarded the Carinthian Cross for distinguished service, or bravery. Among them were Arthur and Dr. Marcell Glesinger, Ida Finger, Moritz Fischbach, Emil Fuchs, Josef Mitzner, Ernst Kopeinig, Karl Sajovic and Dr. Egon Weissberger.⁴⁰ In Carinthia, *Chewra Kadischa* took care of the Jewish front line soldiers in military hospitals, provisioning them with kosher food. The dead were buried with a ceremony at the Jewish cemetery in Klagenfurt St. Ruprecht and immortalised with a memorial plaque.

The overwhelming majority of Jewish soldiers and their officers may have been reconciled to their military service, particularly because it helped satisfy a need for public recognition and equal status. This prompted author, Joseph Roth to make a scathing comment:

“As long as the Jews continue living in foreign countries, they will have to *live for* those countries and unfortunately, they will also have to *die for* them. Yes, there are even Jews who enjoy living and dying for those countries. Some East-European Jews have assimilated into their chosen states, to the extent that have completely internalised the local population’s ideas about ‘Fatherland’, ‘duty’, ‘heroic death’ and ‘war bonds’.”⁴¹

However, their patriotism and will to adapt by no means protected the Jews from anti-Semitic attacks. In the press the talk was in the first place of “shirkers”, and of Jewish soldiers, who, as university graduates, tried to avoid being sent up to the Front. They were seen as doing their military service in less dangerous roles, whilst their Christian comrades allegedly gave their lives for their Fatherland.

At the end of August and the beginning of September 1919 the *Wiener Morgenzeitung* newspaper reported an incident in Villach Warmbad. According to the testimony of witnesses, members of the Kärntner Volkswehr (armed, militia organisation) insulted, abused and robbed a number of Jewish soldiers (the precise number was not specified) for no obvious reason. These soldiers had formerly been prisoners of war in Italy and were now being transported home and being catered for in Villach. It appears that the other returning prisoners and not even the Volkswehr officers felt obliged to intervene and offer assistance. The *Wiener Morgenzeitung* newspaper quoted the shouts of the onlookers from whom the Jewish returnees had asked for help: “Deal with these people for yourselves”⁴². It continued

in sharply critical manner “the scandalous deeds that were perpetrated in Villach are a stain on the honour of the Austrian Volkswehr”.⁴³ By contrast, the local Carinthian press took no notice of the incident.

Some of the Jewish soldiers from Carinthia who had served in the Imperial and Royal Army also participated actively in the Carinthian border struggles of 1918 and 1919. One of them was the notary, Dr. Egon Weissberger, who moved with his family from Velden to Villach in about 1930. As far as is known, in their response to the unresolved border disputes with Yugoslavia, Jewish soldiers from Carinthia adopted a clear pro-Austrian, liberal or even German-national line. Austria was by then a Republic and it reacted completely positively to the patriotism that had been demonstrated in war, and a number of the Jews who had migrated to Carinthia were now rewarded with Austrian citizenship. In Villach this applied to: Jonas Benesch, Ignaz Fischer, Osias Fischbach, Arthur Glesinger, Philipp Lilian, Moritz Löwe, Felix Patek, Johann Ternner und Leon Zwerling.⁴⁴

Jewish former front-line soldiers tried to counteract the political and everyday anti-Semitism of the 1930s, by self-protection initiatives and by conspicuous camaraderie. In 1932 the Association of Jewish Front-line Soldiers (BjF) was founded, as “a shield and sword for Judaism”.⁴⁵ This organisation regarded itself as “a combination of a veterans’ association and a Jewish self-help group”.⁴⁶

Three years later, in December 1935, the local Klagenfurt branch of BjF was founded. Amongst their regulations was a stipulated aim of “cultivation of a sense of patriotism and traditional comradeship, as well as protecting and safeguarding the honour and reputation of Jews resident in Austria”.⁴⁷ In the longer term they also planned to create a Jewish Museum of Heroes and a Heroes’-Almanac. The statutes explicitly pointed out that the Association’s objectives would be pursued “to the strict exclusion of every political bias or tendency”. Nevertheless the BjF represented a conservative organisation supporting the Austro-fascist regime. By contrast with the Zionist movement, it aimed at the full assimilation of Jews into a larger society. In 1938 the BjF shared the fate of other Jewish and non-National Socialist associations: it was banned and dissolved.

¹ Dieter Neumann, Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte. Judendorf, Villach und die Juden, in: Museum der Stadt Villach (Edited), Neues aus Alt-Villach, Villach 2010, pp 131-133.

² Cited in Andrea Lauritsch, Die Juden in Wolfsberg. Nationalsozialistische Verfolgung am Beispiel Wolfsbergs, Wolfsberg 2000, p.7.

³ Wilhelm Wadl, Geschichte der Juden in Kärnten im Mittelalter. Mit einem Ausblick bis zum Jahre 1867, Klagenfurt 1981, p. 166.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 28.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 236.

⁶ In 1772 Galicia became part of the Austrian Monarchy, and it remained a Habsburg Crown Land until 1918. Bordering Galicia, and after Austria had occupied it in 1774, Bukovina was at first annexed to Galicia. From 1849 to the end of the Monarchy Bukovina was an independent Crown Land. Today the western part of Galicia belongs to Poland, the eastern part, with Lemberg, to Ukraine. The former Crown Land of Bukovina too was also partitioned geographically between two countries. The northern half is part of Ukraine, and the southern half, part of Romania.

⁷ Martin Pollack, Kaiser von Amerika. Die große Flucht aus Galizien, Vienna 2010, p.70.

⁸ Martin Pollack, Galizien. Eine Reise durch die verschwundene Welt Ostgaliziens und der Bukowina, Frankfurt/Main 2001, pp. 24 ff.

⁹ Yehuda Bauer, Der Tod des Shtetls, Berlin 2013, p.21.

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- ¹⁰ Thomas Maissen, *Die Geschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, Munich 2013, p.100.
- ¹¹ Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*. Illustrierte Ausgabe, Vienna 2010, p. 48.
- ¹² Bertha Pappenheim (Anna O.), *Zur Lage der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Galizien*. Reiseeindrücke und Vorschläge zur Verbesserung der Verhältnisse, in: Lena Kugler/Albrecht Koschorke (Editors), *Bertha Pappenheim (Anna O.), Literarische und publizistische Texte*, Vienna 2002, pp. 113-177; here: p.134 f.
- ¹³ Martin Pollack, *Galizien*, pp.187 ff.
- ¹⁴ Chassidism was founded by Rabbi Israel Baal Schem Tow in the middle of the 18th century. It represented a popular, mythical-religious renewal movement that promoted the principle of democracy in both its spiritual and material aspects. The individual's rigorous intellectual-religious theoretical learning was opposed to religious insight and understanding gained in the community. For further details see Mark Zborowski/Elisabeth Herzog, *Das Shtetl. Die untergegangene Welt der osteuropäischen Juden*, Munich 1991, pp. 130 ff.
- ¹⁵ Among other organisations influenced by the labour movement, Zionism represented a political and ideological movement, which aimed to create a Jewish nation-state in Palestine. The founder and figurehead of this movement was the journalist and publicist Theodor Herzl, born in Budapest in 1860.
- ¹⁶ Klaus Hödl, *Als Bettler in die Leopoldstadt. Galizische Juden auf dem Weg nach Wien*, Vienna–Cologne–Weimar 1994, p.117.
- ¹⁷ Martin Pollack, *Kaiser von Amerika*, p. 20.
- ¹⁸ Klaus Hödl, *Als Bettler in die Leopoldstadt*, pp. 52 ff.
- ¹⁹ Tim Buchen, *Antisemitismus in Galizien. Agitation, Gewalt und Politik gegen Juden in der Habsburgermonarchie um 1900*, Berlin 2012, pp. 167 ff.
- ²⁰ *Arbeiterwille*, 30th Aug.1898, p.5.
- ²¹ August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich*, Klagenfurt 2009, pp.62 f.
- ²² Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, pp.81 ff.
- ²³ Claudia Erdheim, *Buchbesprechung zu Karl Emil Franzos, Namensstudien, Etudes de noms*, zweisprachige Ausgabe, published by Oskar Ansell, Hannover, 2012, in: *Illustrierte Neue Welt*, June/July 2012. See also: <http://austria-forum.org>
- ²⁴ See Population census results from 31st Dec 1910 for "Israelites" living in Villach District, Bezirkshauptmannschaft Villach, 20th April 1911. KLA, Provincial Government, General Protocols, part 11-20 (1109 "Israelites" in Carinthia).
- ²⁵ *Kärntner Wochenblatt*, 20th Oct 1905, p.8.
- ²⁶ See Population census results from 31st Dec 1910 for the "Israelites" living in Villach District, Bezirkshauptmannschaft Villach, 20th April 1911. KLA, Provincial Government, General Protocols, part 11-20 (1109 "Israelites" in Carinthia).
- ²⁷ See "Lumpensammler" article at: <http://austria-forum.org>
- ²⁸ Leo Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 4th Aug 2003.
- ²⁹ August Walzl, *Juden in Kärnten*, pp.36 f.
- ³⁰ Leo Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 4th Aug 2003.
- ³¹ Interview with Arie (Leo) Lilian, Yad Vashem Archives, 0.3 Testimonies Department, Item 6606547.
- ³² Letter from Fritz (Fred) Reinisch, to Alexandra Schmidt, Boca Raton, 6th Sept 2013.
- ³³ August Walzl, *Juden in Kärnten*, p.78.
- ³⁴ *Villacher Zeitung*, 17th May 1933, p. 9.
- ³⁵ Erwin A. Schmidl, *Juden in der k.(u.)k. Armee 1788–1918. Jews in the Habsburg Armed Forces*, Eisenstadt 1989, pp. 48 ff.
- ³⁶ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 35.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- ³⁸ Birth register entries, IKG Graz.
- ³⁹ Erwin A. Schmidl, *Juden in der k.(u.)k. Armee*, p.84.
- ⁴⁰ See KLA, record of Carinthian Crosses awarded, 1914–1919.

⁴¹ Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, p.35.

⁴² *Wiener Morgenzeitung*, 7th Sept 1919, p.4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ August Walzl, *Juden in Kärnten*, p.102.

⁴⁵ Hauptmann Siegmund (Edler von) Friedmann, in a speech of 4th Oct 1934. Cited in Erwin A. Schmidl, *Juden in der k.(u.)k. Armee*, p.90.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ See KLA, Präsidiumsakten, Vereinskataster 3244.

**“It’s the Jew’s fault”
Political anti-Semitism until 1938**

This is being written in 2010. Posters are on display advertising the comedy *Skup, der Geizige von Ragusa* (*Skup, the Miser of Ragusa*). The play will be performed at the Friesacher Burghofspiele theatre to mark its 60th anniversary. The figure of Skup that the posters depict encapsulates a series of anti-Semitic stereotypes: the crooked, awkward pose, the full beard and the hook nose. That such a depiction could be created, and indeed displayed in public, in the first decade of the 21st century – all of seventy years after the Holocaust experience – is indicative of the fact that Austria has a major problem on its hands: the unthinking recourse to anti-Semitic stereotypes that evokes hardly any public reaction or protest.

The fact is, hostility towards the Jewish population was not a brief aberration limited to the time of the Nazi regime; rather it has a long, deeply-rooted social tradition behind it. From the historical point of view ‘anti-Semitism’¹, as such, is a comparatively recent phenomenon. But by contrast ‘anti-Judaism’, with its religious connotations, has been around for about two thousand years.

Until the end of the 18th century, and on account of their religion, members of the Jewish minority belonged to one of the marginalised groups in society. Discrimination on the part of Christians was fuelled and underpinned by numerous stereotypes, such as claims that Jews were “ritual murderers”, “well poisoners” and “desecrators of Eucharistic hosts”. The English political scientist, Peter Pulzer asserts: “without this burden of inherited prejudice the allure of modern anti-Semitism would be almost unthinkable”.² Anti-Judaism, which is religious in character, was then the basis on which the various forms of political anti-Semitism were able to build in the 19th century. In Austria this modern anti-Semitism emerged not only as a response to the social emancipation of the Jews from 1867, but also against a backdrop of fundamental societal and economic upheavals, and the social problems resulting from them. As the alleged authors and masters of capitalism, socialism and liberalism, the Jews were soon accused of sole responsibility for the decline of the old order: whatever was disagreeable was simply stigmatised as ‘Jewish’. So, liberalism became ‘Jewish liberalism’, the press was the ‘Jewish press’ and the First Republic was the ‘Jewish Republic’.³

All across Europe anti-Semitism developed into political programmes, with a variety of characteristic features. From the turn of the century it served as the guiding ideological principle for numerous parties and associations. However, Austria differed from other parts of Europe in certain features of its political anti-Semitism: for one thing its origins were somewhat later in date, though it was all the more successful for that. For another, right from the start the anti-Semitic movement was predominantly Christian-conservative in character. The vast majority of those who were prone to anti-Semitism were the people who remained most steadfast in defending a cultural landscape shaped by the past. Their picture of the outside world was strongly influenced by ways of thinking coloured by religion and tradition.⁴ From 1900 the Christian-Socialist Party, under the leadership of the Viennese jurist, Dr. Karl Lueger, played a significant role in the rise of anti-Semitism in Austria. It blamed “Jewish tycoons” for the economic crises that had followed the stock market collapse of 1873. The party manifesto included a separate paragraph on the “Jewish issue”, in which it demanded the elimination of Jewish influences from public life, especially in the economy and the

press.⁵ Not least because of his inflammatory anti-Semitic tirades, Lueger finally became Mayor of Vienna in 1897, a position he was to occupy until his death in 1910. Lueger had lent his name to part of the Viennese Ringstraße (orbital road), but this was rescinded in 2012 because of his anti-Semitic politics.⁶

Carinthian anti-Semitism was essentially characterised by its populism and its racism. This can be linked to the political dominance of the German-nationalist camp, with its hard line anti-Slav strategy. Towards the end of the 19th century Georg Heinrich Ritter von Schönerer with his Alldeutsche Partei (Pan-German Party) achieved huge popularity. Originally from Vienna, von Schönerer represented populist-nationalist, anti-clerical and anti-liberal political opinion, paired with a racially inspired anti-Semitism. His slogans such as “unity through purity” and “without Jews, without Romani, will Germania’s throne be built”, were very much to the taste of the Carinthian electorate. He was also co-founder of the German School Association also known as the German School Association Südmark. Its main concern was the promotion of Germanness in border regions. The Association was successful in establishing itself in Villach, and around 1900 it enjoyed great popularity, particularly in conservative-bourgeois circles.⁷

The German School Association was just part of an extremely tight-knit network of German-nationalist associations and parties that had grown up in Carinthia since the 1880s. Unlike the Christian-Socialist and Social-Democratic camps, the Carinthian German-nationalists understood how to make use of local associations, which also had a presence in rural areas. Their political agenda could therefore take root successfully and – more importantly - sustainably. This kind of politics prepared the ground in which the radicalised hybrid of National Socialism could thrive.

By contrast with the German-nationalist and conservative range of parties, the Social Democrats had a rather ambivalent stance on anti-Semitism. On the one hand the party membership of the Austrian Social Democrats included many prominent persons of Jewish origin – among them the founder Viktor Adler and Bruno Kreisky. Yet, on the other, there were also well-known anti-Semites, such as Karl Renner and Oskar Helmer. The fact that there were Jewish politicians in the Social Democrat party made it vulnerable to attack by anti-Semites from other political parties.

Playing the anti-Semitism card meant a considerable number of votes could be gained. So, the Social Democrats put their faith in a strategy that was ambiguous, and it would pay off for them over the entire course of the 20th century. Without (as a rule) promoting offensive anti-Semitic policies themselves, they were still very careful not to appear too frequently in the role of defender of the Jewish population.

So it was that, especially in the first half of the 20th century, they seldom drew a line in the sand, or made explicit statements distancing themselves from anti-Semitic stances. But the real difference from the politics of the German-nationalist and populist-right oriented parties was that anti-Semitism was not used as a targeted political weapon in the party’s manifestos or election campaigns.⁸

FROM POLITICAL TO EVERYDAY LIFE ANTI-SEMITISM

At the turn of the century political anti-Semitism was mainly about verbal acts of violence – a fantasy of violence. Yet with the robust demagoguery of the time this began gradually to be internalised in the consciousness of the people. It found its way down into everyday life, step by step, with ever-increasing violence. For example in November 1907, the *Villacher Zeitung* newspaper carried an item about repeated acts of vandalism in the “Humour” section:

“On the door of a shop in Weißbriachgasse there appears almost daily, as if spirited there overnight by a phantom hand and produced by magic, the following printed inscription or some similar text: “The Jews are about as useful in a community as a mouse in a granary or moths in a wardrobe.”⁹

In all probability the victim of these anti-Semitic attacks was the grain merchant Moritz Braun. At that time he ran a business including a granary in Weißbriachgasse road. In principle, the local press played a major part in disseminating anti-Semitic prejudices and myths. It served as a useful mouthpiece for right-wing radical parties and associations. The *Kärntner Tagblatt* newspaper spoke for the Christian Socialists, the *Kärntner Wochenblatt* for Alldeutsche (the Pan-Germans), the *Villacher Zeitung* agitated on behalf of the National Socialists, and the *Freie Stimmen* supported the Großdeutsche Volkspartei (Great German People's Party). They had all been heavily involved in disseminating anti-Semitic views since the beginning of the 20th century, targeting not just the Jewish population itself, but also Carinthians who were in any way linked to Jews.

An age-old anti-Semitic stereotype viewed the Jew as a “parasite and scrounger” and as the economic competitor of the fictitiously “Aryan” majority population – such clichés were especially topical and damaging in times of economic crisis. Newspaper articles and advertisements continually exhorted the people of Villach exclusively to frequent German shops:

“Old, honest Christian firms go to the wall and people are ruined. Then the businesses are taken over by the Jew, with his junk goods and his high profit margins. And then he transfers the job that he originally held to yet another Jew. [...] So far the situation in Villach has not been too bad, thank the Lord; but the foundations of a colony of Jews have already been laid even here. Only a few years ago, our town could boast being completely Jew-free; today this is no longer the case. In several places in town the Jews Klinger, Blau and so on, have already set up their so-called stores and instalment shops, offering their very questionable manufactured goods. The Jew Braun has opened a commission business for grain, in one of the oldest Christian town houses. And so it goes on.”¹⁰

HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF GIRLS

As is the case with all ideologies that identify scapegoats, a conspiracy theory usually starts with a genuine problem that can be specified in an objective way. The anti-Semites just did the same. This is shown by a debate about human trafficking of girls in the first third of the 20th century. During the course of social upheavals, many people - above all young women – resorted to emigration. Most left their old environment in search of new work opportunities. In this context conservative voices warned of the dangers of international trafficking in girls. The pimp was portrayed in a stylised way as being a particularly dangerous and loathsome threat - and anti-Semitic and racist stereotypes were attributed to him. In fact, Jews both male and female did play a certain role in the trafficking of girls: as culprits but above all, as victims. Around 1900 Galicia was specifically regarded as the main European centre of girl-trafficking. The chief determining factors in the rise in prostitution and pimping were impoverishment of large parts of the Jewish population, loss of traditional values, as well as uncertainties about the future and inadequate education. By conservative estimates, around the end of the 19th century, about 10,000 Galician girls per year - most of them of Jewish

origins - were either being lured or taken against their will to South America. They were recruited by Galician agents both male and female, many of whom were also of Jewish origins. Subsequently anti-Semites linked these initial conditions to the image of the Jew as "greedy and filthy girl-trafficker", a stereotype that wandered like a ghost through literature, films and magazines until well into the 20th century. Of course the anti-Semites were reluctant to discuss the fact that most of the victims of trafficking were Jewish girls and young women.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

At the beginning of the First World War anti-Semitic agitation in the press was still restrained. Since Jewish ratings and commissioned officers took part in combat operations and since the State also needed Jewish capital to finance the War, the anti-Semites for a while maintained a lower profile. In any case, what the press could publish was subject to censorship.

The situation changed as the War progressed. First, a rise in anti-Semitism was triggered by the growing number of Galician-Jewish war refugees arriving in Vienna. As the eventual defeat of the Habsburg Empire became ever more obvious and as the number of the fallen rose, so too, and with increasing frequency, the allegation was made in the media that Jewish soldiers were shirking Front Line service. It is true that overall many soldiers did attempt to avoid going to the Front, but in masterly fashion the anti-Semites represented this as "typically Jewish".¹¹

The German-Jewish politician, Walther Rathenau had foreseen this development as early as 1916 in a letter to a friend: "The more Jews who are killed in the War, the stronger the resolve of their enemies to prove that the Jews all sat back well behind the front line, so that they could profit from the War".¹² With this remark he had anticipated the changed situation towards the end of the War, when the increasingly critical supply situation was drawn into the spotlight. The old cliché of the "Jewish parasite" was now re-invented as the persona of the "war profiteer".

Jewish dealers were accused either of hoarding foodstuffs out of greed for profit, or of charging exorbitant prices, whilst the broad mass of the population starved.¹³

Additional impetus for anti-Semitism was provided by the revolutions in Russia (1917) and Germany (1918/19). The anti-Semites styled them "Jewish revolutions" on account of the Jewish antecedents of their iconic figures - Leon Trotzky in Russia, and Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Kurt Eisner in Germany. In fact many Jews both male and female had turned towards the principles of Socialism, not least because the idea of making the equality of all human beings a top priority gave political hope – hope that included being able to leave behind ethnic stigmatisation and create a more just world.

The European experience of war, defeat, revolution and violence ended by pushing in the opposite direction, however, and in the process it brought with it a new and radicalised facet of anti-Semitism:

"The German – always victorious in an honest dispute – is lying in tatters, barbarically enslaved and humiliated by the entire world of his enemies. And who remains constantly on top after the War, just as he was before and during it? The Jew! Warmonger before the War, profiteer during the War, and after the War victor and ruler of the world! His mission has been accomplished!"¹⁴

In Carinthia conditions for the rise of political anti-Semitism were extremely favourable, on account of its borderland geography and the fact that its political culture was dominated by German-nationalists. Moreover, the so-called “Abwehrkampf” (defence struggle) in 1918 and 1919 and the associated, aggressive anti-Slavism provided extra impetus. It is no coincidence that the later Carinthian Gauleiter (Nazi district commander), Friedrich Rainer considered Carinthia the original birthplace of the Nazi movement.¹⁵ There was a mixture of economic misery, social instability and collective traumatisation as a result of the lost war – and the Nazis knew just how to turn these factors to their own advantage.¹⁶

In 1918 the first Carinthian local branch of the German National Socialist Labour Party (DNSAP) came into being as an offshoot from the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (German Labour Party), established ten years previously. In the same year German Nationalism and anti-Semitism entered Carinthia in the shape of parties and organisations, such as the Kärntner Bauernbund (Carinthian Farmers’ Union), the Deutscher Volksverein für Kärnten (German People’s Association for Carinthia), the Alldeutsche Partei (Pan-German Party) and the Völkischsozialer Verband deutscher Einheit (Populist-Social Association for German Unity). In Villach, they entered the provisional Carinthian Province Assembly, comprising the majority of the representatives. Lawyer Dr. Richard Strobl became the first Mayor of Villach after the First World War. He represented the Völkischsozialer Verband deutscher Einheit, a political group that favoured a totalitarian mind-set and flew the flag for the overriding objectives of combating Social Democracy and International Jewry.¹⁷ Yet in 1919 he switched allegiance to the DNSAP and became one of their leading lights. Under his leadership in August 1920 the National Socialists became the third-strongest political force in Villach. At the local elections; they were able to capture four of the twenty-eight seats in the Municipal Council.

As if spinning a prayer wheel, the parties employed a relentless stream of public diatribes, newspaper articles, pamphlets and books to attract public attention to the allegedly extreme danger posed by the Jews – of course completely disregarding the fact that the actual Jewish share of the total Carinthian population had amounted to less than one percent around 1900.¹⁸

The beginning of the 1920s in the Villach area was marked by a significant upsurge and intensification of German-nationalist and anti-Semitic agitation. In May 1920, an article in the *Villacher Zeitung* newspaper, entitled “Why do we have to be anti-Semitic?” recommended the expulsion of all Jewish migrants who had arrived after 1914.¹⁹

A sitting of the Villach Municipal Council on 8th October 1920 also reflected this mood. The German-nationalist local councillor, Meinhard Gatternig, took a strong stance against accepting an application from the Galician-born Jewish retailer, Moritz Fischbach to join the Heimatverband (Homeland Association); heated discussion ensued. Eventually, the Social-Democratic councillors won the argument by saying that they did not want to set a precedent that would weaken their position. So Fischbach’s application was approved.²⁰

In January 1920 a local branch of the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan-German Association) was established in Villach. Its statutes endorsed:

“Ruthless struggle against the dominance of Jewish aliens, as the most significant and most dangerous poisoners of German blood and German spirit, German economy and German morale.”²¹

Oskar Kraus served as chairman of the Alldeutscher Verband from 1922 to 1932. Subsequently, in his capacity as NS Lord Mayor of Villach, he was to play a key role in ensuring that National Socialist targets were violently and ruthlessly met. Yet, right up until the 21st century, in the popular memory of Carinthians he has predominantly been portrayed as a member of “the defence struggle” and as a “correct Nazi”.²²

It was the same “Mr Oskar Kraus, who is restlessly active when it comes to völkisch (populist/nationalist) matters”²³ who established and chaired the German-Völkisch Working Committee in March 1921. This Committee served as a kind of umbrella organisation for all the völkisch and anti-Republican associations in Villach. No less fanatical were the targets set by the German-Austrian Anti-Semitic Protection Coalition. Set up in 1919 in Vienna by the Christian-Socialist politician Anton Jerzabek, it was launched with the explicit prime objective of opposing the growing influence of the Jews in Europe. In June 1920 and with reference to the establishment of the Villach Anti-Semitic Coalition the *Villacher Zeitung* newspaper reported:

“At last things are starting to move on all sides in the struggle against the drones of our social and economic life - against the Jews, who suck the blood of the entire German people. The call to unite in anti-Semitism is everywhere met with strong approval. And it is no different in Villach, where it is more than likely a necessity if a stop is finally to be put to the town being flooded with Hebrews.”²⁴

The statutes of the local Villach branch specified its top priority: “total solidarity of all German-Aryan citizens in German-Austria, in a collective, shoulder-to-shoulder line of defence (...) against Semitic hegemony”.²⁵

The Anti-Semitic Coalition met at *Hotel Mosser* at regular intervals. At its inaugural meeting it attracted no fewer than 220 members, both male and female.

Franz Lürzer was the founding chairman, with Johann Medweth as his deputy. The teacher Mathilde Hecht, who was subsequently to play a major role in the NSDAP, was appointed secretary. The members’ social backgrounds covered the whole spectrum, from industrialists to labourers. “There will be no shortage of genuine co-workers because the excesses of the Jewish menace become more perceptible by the day”²⁶, the *Villacher Zeitung* predicted after the association’s establishment. A year later, in June 1921 the newspaper urgently warned against the “methods” of Jewish shopkeepers in Villach, who apparently understood modern marketing strategies much better than their Christian competitors:

“The Jewish traders, especially the garment manufacturers, are again starting to offer instalment deals to people on lower incomes. In this way they win over the client loyalty of contracted employees, labourers, small-business tradesmen, retired people on modest pensions. (...) Aryan retailers operating in the same professional fields are therefore being asked to offer easier payment terms, so as to ensure that the Aryan isn’t obliged to throw his money into the Jew’s lap.”²⁷

Meanwhile the NS movement was gaining an ever-increasing significance across Carinthia. In 1922 even Oskar Kraus decided to join the DNSAP. From April 1924 he represented their political policies in the Villach Municipal Council.

In Salzburg in August 1923 a conference was convened for the National Socialist groups from all the Austrian provinces. It brought about a change of direction within the party that

was to have profound consequences. The influence of Adolf Hitler was becoming increasingly apparent. The leader of the German NS movement since 1920, Hitler claimed to control the National Socialist movement as a whole. At the end of the party conference he produced a dramatic, cameo intervention, rhetorically upstaging his Austrian antagonist Walter Riehl, who shortly afterwards resigned. It was the first victory for a new set of political values that were based on the Führerprinzip (leader-principle).²⁸

THEORIES OF RACE

Since as early as the 17th century, the term “race” has been in use in anthropology for categorising different groups of human beings and animals. The French aristocrat Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882) picked up on these racial typologies in his work *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* published in 1855. In it he made reference to an inequality between human races and an alleged decline in culture in the modern period, which he attributed to the intermixture of races. He postulated the “Aryan white race” as the pinnacle of cultural and moral development and argued that it needed to be protected against mixture with other, “inferior” races at all costs.²⁹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) pursued a similar line in his magnum opus *Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (1899). He adopted the core concept of Social Darwinism, the “survival of the fittest”, and so conjured up the myth of a final battle between Aryans and Jews in line with the principles of natural selection. With this anti-Semitic work, Chamberlain, who was Richard Wagner’s son in law, was to become one of the most effective proponents of racist ideology – and in Hitler, whom he even met in person in 1923, he found a fanatical disciple.³⁰

At a stroke, the long term strategic direction of the National Socialist movement was fore-ordained. Publically, Riehl promoted economically and politically motivated anti-Semitism, whilst in private life he did associate with Jewish people. By contrast, Hitler and his followers stood for a radical, racist anti-Semitism which rigorously and uncompromisingly excluded any contact with the Jewish population. The whole range of anti-Semitic factions was now united within the NS movement into a single radicalised, aggressive front, with the concept of race to the fore.

During the years that followed two National Socialist movements competed with each other in Austria: the “more moderate” version of the founding fathers as well as the relatively youthful and more radical version of Hitler’s supporters. At the Salzburg meeting, the majority of Carinthian National Socialists had already made it understood that they supported Hitler, and that they stood behind him unconditionally after the Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923 failed and Hitler was convicted.³¹ The internecine party political conflict between the generations was finally settled in favour of the Hitler movement, when it won a first seat in the Carinthian Provincial Parliament in 1927. Because of dwindling popular support, the older NS generation did not even field candidates for election. By 1930 the NSDAP held two seats in Carinthian Provincial Parliament – the only province in Austria where this figure was reached. Two years later it was as many as ten mandates. Year on year the number of “Brown Shirts” in Carinthian public life was rising, particularly as the global economic crisis and mass-unemployment heightened uncertainties for a broad spectrum of the population.

The National Socialists’ political radicalism was mirrored by the brutalised language, intimidating public demonstrations, and displays of power on the part of the uniformed SA

(armed branch of the NSDAP) and SS goon-squads. And they now began to rely increasingly on the use of physical violence.

When Hitler was appointed “Reichskanzler” (Chancellor) of Germany on 30th January 1933, his Carinthian supporters celebrated wildly. The following months were a time of National Socialist provocations that grew increasingly militant. *Der Vormarsch (Advance)*, which was the published organ of the Carinthian National Socialists between 1931 and 1933, was primarily characterised by crass polemics and targeted, anti-Semitic attacks on Carinthian Jews, both male and female and on anyone associated with them. Language that became ever more radicalised played a role in the increasing number of violent fantasies that were played out in reality. Parallel to these developments, in the early summer of 1933 there were numerous bomb attacks in Carinthia, directed not only at public buildings, but also at unpopular persons. Jewish people were blatantly threatened: “National Socialism, in the name of the welfare of all, will bring [the Jews] well and truly to account, for all their crimes against the body of the German people”.³²

In mid-June 1933 the Austrian Federal Government finally responded to these acts of terrorism, and prompted the closure of the National Socialist Party headquarters, in combination with house searches and the imprisonment of party functionaries.

Following another National Socialist outrage in Krems an der Donau, in the course of which one person was killed and several others badly injured, the government eventually imposed a ban on all NSDAP activities on 19th June 1933. Even though they were now an illegal party, they still continued with their agitation and acts of violence. Just a week after the outlawing of the NSDAP, the *Villacher Zeitung*, the platform of the local National Socialists, published a series of articles against “Jewry that corrupts the nation” and demanding “the eradication of this race”.³³

The activity ban on the NSDAP took place in the so called “Austro-fascist” phase. This term applies to the authoritarian regime established in Austria from 1933/34. This was an alternative variety of fascism competing with that of the German Reich. Essentially it was endorsed and influenced by the Christian-Socialist Party, the Heimwehr (paramilitaries), the Catholic Church, as well as the conceptual bases of Italian fascism and of Corporate Statism.

At the outset the leading figures of Austro-fascism were the Federal Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuß, assassinated by the National Socialists on 25th July 1934, and his successor Kurt Schuschnigg (in office 1934–1938). Of course anti-Semitism was also very appealing to the Austrian Corporate-State fascists. However, their political representatives on the whole rejected the National Socialist racist doctrines; they availed themselves above all of religious forms of anti-Semitism that suited their conservative-Catholic outlook.

Jewish people in Carinthia responded to the ever more threatening situation of the interwar years in very varied ways. Some Jews made even greater efforts to assimilate, whereas others started to become politically active themselves. For example, the Villach notary, Dr. Egon Weissberger, actively supported the Austro-fascist Patriotic Front. In 1946 this is the testimony he placed on record about the period 1934-1938:

“In my capacity as Patriotic Front district leader for the Rosegg judicial district (...), I was given major and difficult assignments. I carried on the tremendous struggle there almost until 11th March 1938. I motivated the patriotic population and at many meetings preached

against the madness of National Socialism (...). All this, despite the Nazis' threats to kill me and despite public defamation and pre-planned attacks."³⁴

Carinthian National Socialists continued to act illegally, especially under the leadership of Hubert Klausner, a veteran of the Carinthian border struggles. The comprehensive geographical coverage provided by networks of völkisch-nationalist associations and organisations was highly advantageous as camouflage for National Socialist activities. On top of that, there was financial support from Berlin: after Vienna and Styria, the Gau (region) of Carinthia received the third largest financial contribution from the German NSDAP. Taking account of the total population of these different regions, Carinthia received the highest per capita subsidy in Austria.³⁵ This generous financial support should be taken as a reflection of the fact that, in comparison with other similarly structured provinces, Carinthia was the one with the highest concentration of National Socialists. In July 1936, in-house NS-statistics indicated a membership of almost 20,000.³⁶

Until 1936 Italy had offered foreign policy support to the Austrian government since it was also fascist in outlook. But following the rapprochement between Germany and fascist Italy, the so-called July Agreement came into effect in the same year. This bi-lateral agreement between Schuschnigg and Hitler essentially involved Germany's recognition of Austrian sovereignty, and Hitler's promise not to interfere with Austria's internal affairs, as well as the abolition of the so-called "Thousand Mark barrier".³⁷ In return Austria agreed to an amnesty for the imprisoned National Socialists, to a co-ordination of foreign policies with the German Reich and the inclusion of two NSDAP members in the Austrian government.³⁸

From 1937 at the latest, the Carinthia NSDAP, under Hubert Klausner, Friedrich Rainer and Odilo Globocnik, were making concerted, practical preparations for the "Anschluss" (annexation) of Austria to the German Reich. At the same time pressure on the Schuschnigg government was rising.

Finally in January 1938 Hitler demanded a general amnesty for the Austrian National Socialists and the appointment of Arthur Seyss-Inquart as Minister for the Interior and for Security. Seyss-Inquart was to go on to become Reichskommissar (commissar) for the occupied Netherlands, where he was responsible for the deportation and forced labour of over 100,000 Dutch Jews. He had a special link with Villach: his mother Auguste was part of the Hyrenbach family of Villach bankers. For several years towards the end of the 19th century his father had taught at the Villach Peraugymnasium grammar school, before moving with his family to Vienna.

Eventually on 12th March 1938 the "Anschluss" (annexation) of Austria was implemented, and greeted with jubilation amongst Austrian National Socialists both male and female. This was the final key step in a paradigm shift in the character of anti-Semitism – from anti-Semitic killing fantasies, via persecution and expulsion, to radical physical annihilation.

¹ The term 'Anti-Semitism' was coined in 1879, by the circle centred on the Hamburg journalist, Wilhelm Marr (1819–1904). Within a very short period it was in common usage across large parts of Europe.

² Peter Pulzer, *Spezifische Momente und Spielarten des Österreichischen und des Wiener Antisemitismus*, in: Gerhard Botz and others (editors), *Eine zerstörte Kultur. Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus in Wien seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, Vienna 2002, pp.129-146, here: p. 130.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 141.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 132.

⁵ Nikolaj Beier, Vor allem bin ich ich. Judentum, Akkulturation und Antisemitismus in Arthur Schnitzlers Leben und Werk, Göttingen 2008, p.29.

⁶ In 2012, and following years of debate, the Dr. Karl-Lueger-orbital road was renamed Universitätsring.

⁷ KLA holdings, Präsidiumsakten, Vereinskataster, no 0761.

⁸ Robert Solomon Wistrich, Sozialdemokratie, Antisemitismus und die Wiener Juden, in: Gerhard Botz a.o. (editors), Eine zerstörte Kultur. Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus in Wien seit dem 19. Jahrhundert, Vienna 2002, pp. 187-196, here: p. 188; also Peter Pulzer, Spezifische Momente, p. 253.

⁹ *Villacher Zeitung*, 24th Nov 1907, p.8.

¹⁰ *Kärntner Wochenblatt*, 20th Oct 1905, p.8.

¹¹ Erwin A. Schmidl, Juden in der k.(u.)k. Armee 1788–1918. Jews in the Habsburg Armed Forces, Eisenstadt 1989, p.82.

¹² Cited in Saul Friedländer, Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933–1939, Munich 2000, p.89.

¹³ Leopold Spira, Feindbild „Jud“. 100 Jahre politischer Antisemitismus, Vienna 1981, p.75.

¹⁴ *Freie Stimmen*, 9th Feb 1919, p.1.

¹⁵ Ulfried Burz, Die nationalsozialistische Bewegung in Kärnten (1918–1933). Vom Deutschnationalismus zum Führerprinzip, Klagenfurt 1998, p. 15.

¹⁶ Volker Ullrich, Adolf Hitler. Die Jahre des Aufstiegs, Frankfurt/Main 2013, p.110.

¹⁷ Werner Koroschitz, Oskar Kraus – Ein korrekter Nazi?, in: Werner Koroschitz/Lisa Rettl (editors), Ein korrekter Nazi. Oskar Kraus. NS-Oberbürgermeister von Villach. Kärntner Erinnerungsk(r)ämpfe, Klagenfurt/Celovec 2006, pp.99-165, here: pp.100 ff.

¹⁸ August Walzl, Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich, Klagenfurt 2009, p.63.

¹⁹ *Villacher Zeitung*, 13th May 1920, p.1.

²⁰ Hearing minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Villach, 8th Oct 1920, p.5; City of Villach Museum

²¹ Section 6 of the Articles of the Aldeutscher Verband (Pan-German Association), from 31st Jan 1920. KLA, Präsidiumsakten, Vereinskataster, 1033-C5.

²² Described in detail, in: Lisa Rettl, Erinnerungsk(r)ämpfe, in: Lisa Rettl/Werner Koroschitz (editors), Ein korrekter Nazi. Kärntner Erinnerungsk(r)ämpfe am Beispiel des Villacher NS-Oberbürgermeisters Oskar Kraus, Klagenfurt/Celovec 2006, pp.11-98.

²³ *Villacher Zeitung*, 3rd March 1921, p.3.

²⁴ *Villacher Zeitung*, 1st June 1920, p.2.

²⁵ KLA, Präsidiumsakten, Vereinskataster, Statutes of the Anti-Semitic Coalition, undated.

²⁶ *Villacher Zeitung*, 10th June 1920, p.2.

²⁷ *Villacher Zeitung*, 11th June 1921, p.2.

²⁸ Ulfried Burz, Die nationalsozialistische Bewegung, p.65.

²⁹ Esther Leroy, Von gutem und schlechtem Blut. Historische Rassentheorien, in: Vokus. Volkskundlich-Kulturwissenschaftliche Schriften 16, volume 2, 2006, pp. 49-62, here: pp.56 ff.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ulfried Burz, Die nationalsozialistische Bewegung, p.66.

³² Hearing minutes of the meeting of the Municipal Council of the City of Villach, 12th Dec 1932, p.7. Cited in Werner Koroschitz, Ein korrekter Nazi?, p.132.

³³ *Villacher Zeitung*, 21st June 1933, p.1.

³⁴ Complaint by Egon Weissberger, to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 21st Sept 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 9/48, Sch. 17.

³⁵ Ulfried Burz, Die Machtergreifung durch die NSDAP in Kärnten, in: Helmut Rumpler (editor), März 1938 in Kärnten. Fallstudien und Dokumente, Klagenfurt 1989, pp.81-96, here: p.86.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 87.

³⁷ With the purpose of undermining the Austrian economy, Germany issued a decree on 27th May 1933, stipulating that every German from the Reich would be obliged to pay 1,000 Reichsmarks to cross the border into Austria.

³⁸ Edmund Glaise-Horstenau became a minister without portfolio; Guido Schmidt became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SUMMER RESORT ANTI-SEMITISM

When Carinthia was connected to the Monarchy's expanding railway network towards the end of the 19th century, the first wave of summer visitors also arrived. People from the big cities discovered the pleasures of the bathing lifestyle and marvelled at the allure of sun-flooded lakeside landscapes. Visitors from all over the world came to local bathing places and health resorts. Amongst them were the Sephardic Canetti family, with their son Elias, who stayed on Lake Wörthersee for three summers.¹ Business people, entrepreneurs and executives from faraway places – Christians and Jews alike – settled as villa owners next door to local middle-class people around the Carinthian lakes.

The outbreak of the First World War put an abrupt halt to the growth of tourism. Substantial parts of the population were reduced to poverty in the aftermath of the War and this again severely restricted foreign tourism.

On top of this were the food shortages. So, rather than trying to attract visitors, the provinces and municipalities were concerned to send them packing again as soon as possible. Only outsiders who were house-owners were still tolerated amongst the villa colonies. All other visitors were considered superfluous consumers. To prevent a food situation that was already critical from getting worse, the provisional Carinthian provincial government put in place entry- and residence- restrictions. On no account should Carinthia become a place of refuge for the starving and sick of the big cities.

In short, the poor food supply situation, linked with existing anti-Semitic prejudices, resulted in large parts of the population rejecting all things “foreign”, especially Jewish summer visitors. Now the outsider was no longer considered a guest but an enemy, and soon the enemy also acquired a more specific identity: Jewish speculators and black-marketeers, who allegedly used their wealth for self-indulgence in the coffeehouses and hotels, and so pushed up prices. Terms such as “East European”, “Galician”, “black-marketeer”, “interloper”, “nouveau riche”, “price hiker”, “usurer”, “blood sucker” and “war profiteer” were practically used as synonyms for Jewish people. In reality the proportion of people who had grown rich from the War was vanishingly small as compared to those who had lost everything through now worthless war bonds and galloping inflation. The allegation that Jewish people were black-marketeers drew comment from Johann Loewenfeld-Russ, who spent his earliest childhood at his parents' *Villa Seehof* in Velden on Lake Wörthersee. During his time as Secretary of State for Feeding the People (1918–1920), he took stringent action against the ubiquitous black-market. In his unpublished memoirs written in 1943 he noted with subtle irony:

“In the Second World War even German thoroughness has not been able to stop the black-market rearing its head again. Since the Jews have been expelled, it seems as if black-marketeering is not necessarily as closely related to race and religion as used to be said. Apparently Aryans do it too.”²

As in other provinces anti-Semitic attacks became more frequent in Carinthia after the First War had ended. Particularly striking is the radicalisation of the language used:

“In our beautiful Carinthia there are now hordes of Viennese Jews perpetrating their mischief. At every turn you meet these well-fed gentlemen with their little handbags; the inns and restaurants are teeming with them and you can only admire their healthy appetite as they demolish their two roasts and three pastries. You even bump into them in the countryside, in the smallest of villages, and their well stocked purses betray the fact that they are not hanging around here aimlessly. The reason for their presence is clear enough. All the food that is still available is bought on the black-market, at excessively high prices. These cavalier figures also show a very keen interest in jewellery, furniture, pictures, and so on. And in our local newspapers we find notices informing us that Mr. ‘Mandelkern’ (Mr. ‘Almond Seed’) or ‘Veilchenduft’ (‘aroma of violets’) is available for consultation on ‘business matters’ at this or that hotel. International - rather *anti-national* - Social Democracy is the Jews’ great protector. When the elections are on, we are always hearing that the Social Democrats are combating the black-markets, usury and the exploitation of the people. But how can they do that when their leaders are Jews, for whom usury is one of the peculiarities of their race? (...) Today, however, anyone who can afford a summer break is either rich by birth, or a war profiteer with a hook nose.”³

Nationalist representatives on Villach Municipal Council demanded the immediate expulsion of foreign visitors. The Social Democrat Wilhelm Eich opposed this and conducted a fact-based analysis of the economic factors that led to black marketeering. For this, he became an object of mockery and ridicule in the local Carinthian press. Another favourite target of hatred was the abovementioned politician Johann Loewenfeld-Russ (1873–1945). In view of the sufferings of the Viennese population, he advocated a relaxation of Carinthian residence restrictions and was accused of acting in self-interest because he owned a villa in Velden:

“It is blatantly obvious that the whole tribe of good old Jewish friends and their hangers-on won’t let slip the opportunity of latching on to Löwenfeld-Ruß now that he has become so rich. They will make sure that they can get back to Lake Wörthersee on his coattails. Apart from Löwenfeld-Ruß the following families need to be named: Pollak, Mayer, Weishut, Kern, Schur (with around 50 members), Schwarz, Weiß, Weißhuter, Goldschmidt, Weiner, Hecht, Neustadtl, Freißler-Flesch and still others. This Jewish colony is predominantly resident in Velden. Dr. Löwenfeld-Ruß isn’t greatly bothered about the people who really are in need of a summer break, rather he is anxious on behalf of his Jewish followers – worried that they will no longer be allowed to enjoy Lake Wörthersee freely and to carry on with their relentless hoarding.”⁴

Barely two decades later almost all families listed above suffered expropriation, persecution and murder at the hands of the National Socialists.

Amongst Carinthian provincial politicians the debates about travel restrictions were by no means free of anti-Jewish undertones. In Vienna the Federal Office of State for the Interior issued a statement declaring that the Provincial Government was not authorised to restrict freedom of travel – and naturally enough this caused quite a stir. Drawing upon anti-Semitic stereotypes, individual Representatives strongly opposed Vienna’s attempt to exert an influence, which they stigmatised as a perfect “Vienna Jewry botched job”.⁵ This issue now caused previously latent antagonisms between the Federal capital and the Province of Carinthia to erupt into full public view. In the opinion of many Carinthian politicians a

“hydrocephalic” Vienna was threatening to suck the Province dry. And it is hardly surprising that memories of the short-lived attempts to create a “Carinthian Republic” around 1918/19 flowed just beneath the surface of the anti-Vienna movement. As the *Kärntner Tagblatt* newspaper clearly stated:

“Every single one of us has given up expecting real advantages to accrue from the German-Austrian state. Would we have been able to get rid of the southern Slavs had we not helped ourselves and only relied on Vienna? Vienna has failed us in every respect – why shouldn’t we part company from this ‘employer’?”⁶

The German-nationalist press strongly associated the idea of a “Carinthian Republic” with the struggle against the “Jewish” metropolis, where “in the present-day economy a disproportionately large number of Jews occupies important government positions and threatens to suffuse the entire administration of German-Austria with an un-Germanic, Semitic spirit.”⁷

In the provisional Carinthian Assembly on 22nd November 1918, one of the Christian-Socialist Representatives attacked the German-Austrian government led by Social Democrats, as “a hook-nosed regime”.⁸

The Social Democrat politician August Neutzler was no different. In 1919 he lectured the Carinthian Provincial Parliament about “Jewish misers” and then went on to attribute to them “more than their fair share of craftiness and cunning”. At the end of his address he underlined unmistakably that the Social Democrats were either Germans or Aryans, but on no account Jews.⁹ The demand for a separate Carinthian Republic was grist to the mill of the *Villacher Zeitung*. The paper opined: “Do away with Jewish Vienna, but not with the German Alpine Province. Then what remained would be the ideal Alpine Republic”¹⁰. Even Jewish boy-scout troops were a thorn in the side of the spokesmen for anti-Semitism. They offered portentous warnings about the “upstart Jewish riff-raff”¹¹, who would in future want to pitch their summer camps in the Gailtal and Lesachtal valleys:

“Farmers, landowners, guest house keepers! Hold those bands of Jewish youths at bay; provide no accommodation, or opportunities for a stay in the neighbourhood. (...) However by contrast the Aryan scouts who are our people and the Wandervögel (‘Migratory Birds’ youth movement) should be greeted open-heartedly and in friendship.”¹²

Along with the dream of an undisturbed community lifestyle shared amongst pure German, Alpine residents, in some Carinthian holiday resorts there went a corresponding hostility towards outsiders. In a letter to the Carinthian Provincial Government in June 1920, the representatives of Sattendorf complained that there were limits to residents’ willingness to welcome strangers who “are in all probability paid up members of the guild of black marketeers and sneak-thieves”.¹³ So they asked the Provincial Government to support the Local Authority’s stringent handling of entry and residence permits.

Immediately after the War the general mood was still opposed to the tourist trade. Yet, from 1920 measures were implemented with a view to reviving it. In June of that year, the Provincial Government authorised the municipalities around the Wörthersee and Millstättersee to accept 500 holiday guests on each lake. Right from the start, Seeboden refused to accept any Jewish guests under this scheme.¹⁴

The Klagenfurt and Environs Tourism Association maintained that tourism had to be revitalised. Otherwise, they said, there was a fear that locally owned guest houses and associated facilities might have to be sold off to undesirable outsiders. So an appeal went out to all accommodation establishments to extend a welcome primarily to guests who were “decent Germans from the Reich”.¹⁵ Although tourism was a sorely needed source of income in Carinthia at the beginning of the 1920’s, spiteful reporting and hostile discussions in the nationalist newspapers and associations continued. Jewish summer guests were unceasingly called names, such as “obese Jews” and “fat Jewish women”, newspaper editors referred to Lake Klopeiner See as the “Jews’ aquarium” and they spluttered in rage about “unrestrained Palestinian activities”, about “Jewish poison”, and the “oriental, low-life bars with which outsiders are transforming the Carinthian spas into Galician villages”. Of course the local Jewish population was also caught up in the hate-ridden anti-Semitic tirades against the outsiders. To them these attacks represented not just a psychological blow, but an economic burden too. In fact the wide-spread boycott of Jewish shops immediately implemented in March 1938 was by no means an invention of the new National Socialist regime. It had been in common usage since the 1920’s and had subsequently been radicalised step by step.

“In summer a Jew is the honoured spa guest, in winter he is the Jewish swine”; a member of the British army of occupation in 1946 gave this account of what he saw as common practice throughout Carinthia.¹⁶ His assessment was essentially correct, but in individual cases anti-Semitism was so severe that Jewish guests were even turned away during the summer months. For instance, the Techendorf Tourism Committee wanted to know that “lovely Lake Weißensee” had been cleansed of Jews. For this purpose they even produced their own brochures entitled “Jews are uninvited guests at Lake Weißensee.”¹⁷

Summer-break anti-Semitism was by no means accepted without objections, especially on the part of Viennese visitors. The Viennese magazine *Die Brücke* asked individual Carinthian municipalities to give a firm indication about whether Jews were welcome guests. The magazine then publically named all the various holiday resorts and tourist accommodation establishments that indulged in militant anti-Semitism.

The *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper also spoke out sharply against the anti-Semitism cultivated in Carinthia:

“This anti-Semitic hatred is not just a barefaced insult against the Jews, who are guilty only of a lack of foresight in choosing to spend their summer holiday in resorts that are to be kept free from Jews (...). The weapon to be used by upright citizens of Vienna against the vulgar behaviour of Aryan accommodation providers and mayors, together with their local councillors, is the profoundest contempt. Grant bigotry its little bit of enjoyment and steer well clear of those summer resorts with their Aryan rules. The Dreschflügel (“threshing flails” and by extension those who use them) branded with the Swastika should be left to themselves. It is indeed sad that many highly frequented Austrian resorts are radically anti-Semitic until mid-June and then, from the middle of June to September they are hypocritically friendly towards Jews – Jewish money is still money – and from mid-September they once more revert to anti-Semitism.”¹⁸

At the same time this liberal newspaper also appealed against hostility towards Jews in the Austrian mountains:

“Where hatred is shouted unashamedly from the billboards, where the path up to the refuge hut is marked with Swastikas, where the refuge hut itself is daubed with roaring anti-Semitic slogans, these are places where there is nothing to attract the peace-loving elements of society.”¹⁹

“BERG HEIL!” ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE VILLACH ALPINE ASSOCIATION

Towards the end of the 19th century, middle-class mountain enthusiasts organised themselves into various alpine associations. Right from the start, maintaining the values of the German people and the dominance of German culture were central concerns for the German and Austrian Alpine Association (DuOeAV). At the General Assembly in Villach in August 1872, emphasis was placed on the “cultural-historical mission of the Germans” and it was observed that “the purpose of the German Alpine Association [is] not only climbing the heights, but more particularly, disseminating the German spirit, German education and civilisation”.²⁰

German nationalism also left its mark on the Austrian Tourist Club (ÖTK). Founded in 1877 the Eisenkappel Section of the ÖTK demanded that Germanness should be a matter of absolute “top priority in the Alps”. In militant manner the representatives of the Eisenkappel Section also promised “always to fly the German flag in those areas that are beset by the breaking tide of Slavic culture”.²¹

As early as 1907, in a meeting of a number of Alpine Associations in Jesenice, including the Villach Section of the Alpine Association, the participants decided to publish a list of German accommodation and refreshment facilities, so as to avoid German tourists having to give their money to any “opponents of the people”.²² Accordingly, the list of “German summer resorts at the foot of the Karawanken mountains” was published, so that hikers could “wherever possible stop off at the premises of a German inn keeper and at German refuge huts”.²³ Solstice celebrations were also staged in a proper German spirit:

“On Sunday evening bonfires were lit to celebrate the solstice, in all the mountains from the Dobratsch as far as the hills of the Rosental valley. As the bonfires were lit, one by one down the line, so all hearts were enflamed and strengthened by the feeling of Germanness.”²⁴

Under the pretext that it was “scientific”, around 1900 Germanisation of the Slovenian and Italian mountain names also began.²⁵ The results of this soon found their way into the tourist literature. In 1908 the DuOeAV demanded the official inclusion of Germanised mountain names in indexes of places and on military maps. As regards the Dobratsch, the panoramic mountain above Villach, its Slovenian name was generally repudiated by the functionaries of the Alpine Association. Historian Martin Wutte was very insistent that the German name ‘Villacher Alpe’ had earlier antecedents than the Slovenian name, Dobrač.²⁶

After the collapse of the Monarchy, Austria, once so powerful, had been shrunk to the size of a small state. The DuOeAV above all mourned its lost refuge huts. Even before the First World War, exploration of the Alps had not been spared the Nationalists’ attentions, but after the War a real politicisation of the mountain world was effected. Feelings of resentment were especially targeted at Slovenes, proletarians and Jews.

The Viennese Section of the DuOeAV-Austria now differentiated between “self-aware German” and “alien” mountain tourists. To the Alpine Association functionaries it was all too understandable that a “holy wrath” should flare up in the hearts of a German mountaineer, “if

he found the refuge huts full of foreign-national men and women carrying on in a debauched and licentious manner, splashing out with their money, and claiming all the space in the public room and all the sleeping places for themselves”.²⁷

In the inter-war period the DuOeAV functioned as an important activist organisation for National Socialism, fostering both aggressive anti-Slovene and anti-Semitic sentiment. Since the end of the 19th century individual DuOeAV sections had endeavoured to have the so-called “Aryan clause” included in their local statutes – a provision that denied membership to “non-Aryans”.

At first these attempts failed because of resistance from the Joint Committee. It fell to the Villach Section at the DuOeAV General Meeting in Nuremberg in October 1919, finally to propose the inclusion of the “Aryan clause” in the General Association Statutes. Because of a procedural error the application was not put to a vote, but in the subsequent discussion it was decided that “no obstacle should be put in the way of individual Sections that wanted to insert the Aryan clause in their statutes”.²⁸ Accordingly, at their Annual General Meeting in February 1920, the Villach Section passed the resolution by fifty-three votes to six. Just a few weeks later – in May 1920 – the Villach and Graz Sections acting together proposed a motion for the inclusion of the clause in the Joint Committee’s General Statutes too.²⁹

In October 1921 the Viennese Section-Austria also resolved to accept the “Aryan clause”, leading to the resignation of Jewish members who then founded the Donauland (Danube Region) Section. So, in the years that followed, anti-Semitic agitation was predominantly targeted at the Donauland Section. The Carinthia Sections of the Association protested in unison against the adoption of the newly founded Donauland Section by the main Association. The Wolfsberg Section Association wrote in a letter to the DuOeAV Joint Committee in May 1921: “We Carinthians are confronted with the ever-present danger that our mountains will become a playground for oriental invaders, since our lakes, especially Lake Wörthersee, are almost completely infested with Jews. Therefore we warmly welcome the fact that the Viennese Section and other Sections have now included the Aryan clause in their statutes”³⁰.

From the summer of 1921 a considerable number of Austrian Alpine Association huts exhibited posters noting that any Donauland Section members would not receive the normal discount on hut charges. The Carinthian Sections even resolved to introduce boards at their huts, saying “Members of the Donauland Section (...) not welcome at this hut”.³¹ Cautioned by the Joint Committee for their anti-Semitic posters, the Villach Section formulated the following response:

“Firstly we would like to point out that the Villach Section adopted the Aryan clause with the approval of the Joint Committee; so we are also authorised to manage the Section’s administration and huts in accordance with German-völkisch guidelines. Anti-Semitism is of course also part of these guidelines. Furthermore we would also like to highlight that by displaying the Jew-poster we also intended to warn off any racially alien elements, whose appearance at our huts might seriously disturb alpine tranquillity.”³²

The Joint Committee, which was inclined to oppose the use of this kind of outspoken anti-Semitic poster, stated with regret “apart from refusing to grant a subsidy or from expelling them, no other sanction against the Villach Section is available”. Reinhold von Sydow, the DuOeAV chairman attempted to exercise a moderating influence on the Villach members

who were present at the meeting, to prevent “the matter developing into a full-blown conflict between the Villach Section and the Joint Committee”³³.

In 1922, at the request of several ÖTK Sections (amongst them the Klagenfurt Section) the “Aryan clause” was also adopted by the Austrian Tourist Club. A year later the Villach Section decided to replace the inscription used hitherto (“Jews and members of the Donauland Section are unwelcome at this hut”) by the text, “Jews are forbidden to enter”. As a consequence the Joint Committee again asked the Section to remove the prohibition signs from their huts.³⁴ In the end “following a long dialogue and after discussing the pros and cons in detail”, the Villach Section reluctantly removed the unconditional prohibition on Jews. In its place a placard was to be introduced, “telling every Jew that he is an unwelcome guest”.³⁵ In this connection, the Villach Section also informed the Joint Committee of the future wording of the inscription: “Jews are not welcome to enter”.³⁶

The Social Democrat ‘Friends of Nature’ were fundamentally opposed to the anti-Semitism of the middle-class Alpine Associations. In 1922, the workers’ platform, *Arbeiterwille*, reported in great detail on the Villach Section’s “Prohibition on Jews”. In an article entitled “Aryan Clause on the Dobratsch” the newspaper was outraged “that a group of völkisch gentlemen have daubed all the entrance doors of the accommodation places and refuge huts”, with “swastikas each half a metre high” and the inscription “Jews are forbidden to enter”.³⁷ In the following issue *Arbeiterwille* again took a stand against putting anti-Semitism into practice:

“Some time ago the local Villach branch of the German-Austrian Alpine Association acquired ownership of the refuge hut on the Dobratsch. Lately, the words: “Jews are forbidden to enter this house!” have been emblazoned on the hut. Of course this inscription is also accompanied by the sign of the Swastika. We have heard that the inscription was applied following a resolution of the Villach branch. What’s more, the same branch is said to have decided that the tenant of the refuge hut will lose his contracted lease the moment he allows a Jew to enter his establishment. In any case, the consequence of this imbecilic ban will be that most people will avoid the refuge house on the Dobratsch altogether. It is telling that an entire organisation such as this can fall for these people’s shameful tricks, and passes this kind of resolution. Only an organisation that is led by children, by fatheads, or by senseless clods could possibly do this.”³⁸

It must be noted that the Villach Section of the Alpine Association did not, however, cultivate its anti-Semitism in a completely independent way. They were part of a larger network that united to form the City of Villach “German-völkisch Working Committee”. This amounted to a confederation of various National Socialist activist organisations that not only propagated the idea of “Anschluss” (annexation by Germany), but above all campaigned against everything that was “non-Aryan” and consequently “degenerate”. Anti-republican attitudes and hatred of the Jewish population became the lowest common denominators amongst the organisations affiliated to it. Among these were the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan-German Association), the Deutsche Verkehrsgewerkschaft (German Transport Union) and the Austrian Alpine Association, the Heimatschutzverband (Homeland Protection Association), the Willroider Shooting Club, the Bauerngman (Villach charitable organisation), the German School Association Südmark, the German Turnverein (Gymnastics Association) and various Student Fraternities.

In this diverse Working Committee it was particularly Theodor Janisch, also a board member of the Villach Alpine Association, who followed the strict anti-Semitic line. Janisch ran a goldsmith's and optician's business on Villach's main square, and was a founder member of the Villach local branch of the NSDAP on whose behalf he was active in the Municipal Council from 1920 to 1933.

However he did not live long enough to witness the "Anschluss" for which he had fought so hard. He died on 2nd December 1937. The NSDAP honoured him for his services to the Party in December 1938, by renaming Peraustraße (street) "Theodor-Janisch-Straße". Even before 1938 many of the Alpine Association refuge huts had become strongholds from which National Socialist terror attacks could be launched. Given these circumstances, there is no escaping the conclusion that the Alpine Association was one of the trailblazers for National Socialism. Every path into the mountains had become Adolf Hitler's path, as Viktor Paschinger – chairman of Klagenfurt Section - declared on the occasion of the 1938 "Anschluss", stating the obvious.³⁹ It was to take until the 21st century before the Villach Section of the Alpine Association faced up to its anti-Semitic, National Socialist history. In June 2011, as part of the Unikum-Kunstaktion (arts event) entitled *Haus-Berg-Verbot* (*House-Mountain-Ban*) the Section unveiled a plaque at the Dobratsch Summit House in remembrance of than ban on Jewish access.⁴⁰ However the Carinthia Provincial Austrian Alpine Association, as well as the majority of the individual sections have continued – and still continue - to veil their past behind a wall of silence.

"GUT HEIL!" THE GERMAN TURNVEREIN (GYMNASTICS ASSOCIATION) VILLACH
Significant support for NS ideology also came from the German-völkisch oriented Gymnastics Associations, whose membership had virtually all declared for the National Socialist Party by the early 1930s. Their slogan, "purity of the race, unity of the people and freedom of the mind", had been preached by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778–1852) as early as the 19th century. Soon these were to become the guiding principles of the gymnastics clubs and the seeds of racist theory fell on especially fertile ground here. So it is no surprise that the German Gymnastics Association very early inserted the "Aryan clause" into its statutes. When this clause was pushed through in 1909, the gymnasts were already keen to maintain "racial hygiene", which meant that anyone who was "afflicted with organic defects" remained excluded from the Gymnastics Association.⁴¹ And so, as early as the 1920's a kind of eugenics was being applied, representing a preliminary step towards the later murder programmes devoted to the extermination of "worthless lives".

In their symposia, staff constantly urged the Carinthian gymnasts to combat the "Jewish spirit" that they saw everywhere, because "today, just as in former times, the enemies of the people and of the blood are at work to poison and paralyse German power and the German will".⁴²

As a militant National Socialist activist organisation the Villach German Gymnastics Association played a key role in the City's völkisch associative life. In the Association's own eyes gymnastics was not just a sports activity but also "a necessary education for brave warriors in the name of liberation from the insufferable chains of slavery".⁴³

With its involvement in the German-völkisch Working Committee and from as early as the 1920s, the Villach German Gymnastics Association's associative policies had anticipated at a microcosmic-level a number of measures that were subsequently implemented across the whole of the German Reich in 1938. These ranged from severing connections with Jewish businesses, banks, physicians and lawyers right up to boycotting Jewish shops.

By March 1921 the German-völkisch Working Committee was already demanding that a “German House” should be built in Villach, to serve the völkisch groups as a platform for their agitation activities.⁴⁴ In 1927, with the opening of the sports hall, their wishes were finally fulfilled. Here was a centre for the cultivation of their belief systems, völkisch myths and grossdeutsch Lebensraum (‘Greater German living space’) ideologies. Soon the sports hall in Gerbergasse (road) became a centre of direct action propaganda for the NSDAP, who staged their “pro-Anschluss” demonstrations there. These took the form of paramilitary parades, in many instances also commemorating 10th October 1920 (date of the decisive Carinthian plebiscite).

On 9th October 1932 as part of the plebiscite anniversary celebrations, völkisch-minded Villach citizens in SA, SS and Hitler Youth squads marched from the home of the German Gymnastics Association in Gerbergasse to the war memorial at the City Parish Church. The headlines were suitably enthusiastic: “Villach under the sign of the Swastika”.⁴⁵

In the so-called “prohibition years”⁴⁶ from 1933-8, the German Gymnastics Association in Villach provided a hiding place for many illegal National Socialists, who performed their Party work under the cover of Association activities. According to the estimates of the Villach Police Commissariat, by autumn 1933 around eighty percent of former SA and SS members were also members of the Villach Gymnastics Association.⁴⁷

The extent of the blurring of boundaries between the NSDAP and the German Gymnastics Association was subsequently demonstrated during the criminal investigations into the 1938 November pogrom. After the questioning of all SA members, who had participated in ransacking and plundering Jewish homes in 1938, the court stated that beyond any doubt “the German Gymnastics Association had functioned as a cover for the SA, especially after the Party had been banned”.⁴⁸

The Gymnastics Association and its membership was an essential player amongst the organisations that took the crucial step from verbal anti-Semitism to the use of physical violence. Indeed the Villach Gymnastics Association offered its National Socialist members protection and shelter, not just in the years before 1938 but even those that followed 1945.⁴⁹ Nor was this just the Villach Section; the Austrian Gymnastics Association (ÖTB) as a whole consistently pursued its chosen ideological course. In 1979 the ÖTB *Bundesturnzeitung* magazine published an article interpreting the Holocaust as self-defence against the Jews. Still adhering to its own programme it declared: “wars always claim victims: dead, wounded and imprisoned. World Jewry should have considered this when proclaiming war against Germany”.⁵⁰

In a final judgment issued by the Viennese Higher Regional Court on 23rd April 1981, the *Bundesturnzeitung* magazine was said to have exhibited a “neo-fascistic manner of writing”. Furthermore it was affirmed that the ÖTB Association engaged in propaganda and activities consistent with National Socialism.⁵¹

As a consequence of this and with reference to fascist tendencies within the ÖTB Association, the then Federal Vice-Chancellor, Fred Sinowatz, withdrew from his patronage from the Austrian Federal Gymnasts’ festival due to take place in Villach in July 1981. Such fears of contagion were unknown to the Carinthian provincial politicians, who “in loyalty to old comrades stepped into the breach”, taking over “the role of patron of German gymnastics”.⁵²

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- ¹ Elias Canetti, *Die gerettete Zunge. Geschichte einer Jugend*, Frankfurt/Main 1991, p.35.
- ² Cited in Renate Gross, Hans Loewenfeld-Russ. *Ein österreichischer Beamter*, Phil. diploma thesis, Vienna 2005, p.151.
- ³ *Freie Stimmen*, 13th April 1919, p.7.
- ⁴ *Ibidem*, 16th April 1919, p.3. Also see Heidi Rogy, *Tourismus in Kärnten. Von der Bildungsreise zum Massentourismus (18.–20. Jahrhundert)*, Klagenfurt 2002, pp.207 ff.
- ⁵ *Freie Stimmen*, 6th April 1919, p.3.
- ⁶ *Kärntner Tagblatt*, 15th Jan 1919, p. 3. Also see Hellwig Valentin, *Die Idee einer „Kärntner Republik“ in den Jahren 1918/19*, Klagenfurt 1992.
- ⁷ *Freie Stimmen*, 29th Dec 1918, p. 2.
- ⁸ Cited in Hellwig Valentin, *Die Idee einer „Kärntner Republik“*, p. 65.
- ⁹ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁰ *Villacher Zeitung*, 1st Jan 1919, p. 3.
- ¹¹ *Villacher Zeitung*, 3rd Sept 1921, p. 4.
- ¹² *Ibidem*, 8th Sept 1921, p. 2.
- ¹³ See Heidi Rogy, *Tourismus in Kärnten*, p. 208.
- ¹⁴ *Freie Stimmen*, 4th July 1920, p. 3.
- ¹⁵ *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, 12th April 1921, p. 1.
- ¹⁶ Consolidated Intelligence Report No. 28, HQ PWB British Units (Austria), 30th Jan 1946, in: Gabriela Stieber (editor), *Consolidated Intelligence Report. Eine Quellenedition zur Geschichte der britischen Besatzungsmacht in Kärnten*, Klagenfurt 2005, p. 375.
- ¹⁷ *Freie Stimmen*, 1st June 1927, p.3.
- ¹⁸ *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4th June 1927, p. 5.
- ¹⁹ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁰ Festschrift der Section Villach des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereines. *Zur Feier des 25jährigen Bestehens 1869–1894*, published by DuOeAV Villach Section Villach, Villach 1895, p. 9.
- ²¹ Ludwig Jahne, *Die Tätigkeit der alpinen Vereine*, in: *Südmark-Kalender*, Graz 1906, p. 91.
- ²² Ludwig Jahne, *Völkischer Reiseführer durch die Deutschen Siedlungen Südösterreichs*, hg. mit der Unterstützung des Vereines Südmark und vom Fremdenverkehrsausschuß der deutschen Volksräte für die Alpenländer, Klagenfurt 1914, p.7.
- ²³ Ludwig Jahne, *Die Tätigkeiten der alpinen Vereine in Kärnten*, p.93.
- ²⁴ *Kärntner Nachrichten*, 26th June 1895, p. 4.
- ²⁵ Franz Pehr, *Beiträge zur Namenskunde im Hochstuhl- und Koschutagebiet der Karawanken*, in: MDÖAV, No. 8, 1909, pp.109-113.
- ²⁶ For more on the history of Villach's local mountain, see Werner Koroschitz, *Alles Dobratsch. Stadtblick–Berg*. Catalogue about the exhibition, from 21st September to 3rd November 2002, Villach–Klagenfurt/Celovec 2002.
- ²⁷ *Festschrift zum 70jährigen Bestand des Zweiges Austria, 1862–1932*, published by DuOeAV, Vienna 1932 pp. 149 f.
- ²⁸ Protokoll der 20. Sitzung des Hauptausschusses, Nuremberg, 8th and 10th Oct 1919, p. 14. Austrian Historic Archive of the Austrian Alpine Association, Innsbruck. See also Martin Achrainger, „So, jetzt sind wir ganz unter uns!“ Antisemitismus im Alpenverein, in: *Jüdisches Museum Hohenems* (publisher), *Hast du meine Alpen gesehen. Eine jüdische Beziehungsgeschichte*, Vienna 2009, S. 288-317.
- ²⁹ Protokoll der 21. Sitzung des Hauptausschusses, Passau, 20th May 1920, p. 7. Historic Archive of the Austrian Alpine Association, Innsbruck.
- ³⁰ Letter from the Wolfsberg Alpine Association Section, to the DuOeAV Joint Committee, Wolfsberg, 10th May 1921. Historic Archive of the Austrian Alpine Association, ZV 6.202.
- ³¹ *Villacher Zeitung*, 19th Jan 1922, p. 3.
- ³² Villach Section to the Joint Committee, Villach, 22nd June 1922. Historic Archive of the Austrian Alpine Association, Innsbruck, ZV 6.205.

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- ³³ Protokoll der 27. Sitzung des Hauptausschusses, Bayreuth, 16th July 1922, p.5. Historic Archive of the Austrian Alpine Association, Innsbruck.
- ³⁴ *Villacher Zeitung*, 17th Jan 1923, p. 3.
- ³⁵ *Villacher Zeitung*, 22nd Dec 1923, p. 3.
- ³⁶ Protokoll der 30. Sitzung des Hauptausschusses, Munich, 17th and 18th April 1924, p.. Historic Archive of the Austrian Alpine Association, Innsbruck.
- ³⁷ *Arbeiterwille*, 3rd Sept 1922, p. 4.
- ³⁸ *Arbeiterwille*, 23rd Sept 1922, p. 6.
- ³⁹ *Freie Stimmen*, 26th May 1938, p. 4.
- ⁴⁰ For more information about the unveiling of the memorial plaque, see Tina Perisutti, Judenverbot am Dobratsch/Dobrač. Reflexion über eine Kunstaktion am Berg, in: BMUKK (publisher), Magazin für Erwachsenenbildung. Das Fachmedium für Forschung, Praxis und Diskurs. Issue 15, Vienna 2012, pp. 1-9.
- ⁴¹ Rainer Amstädter, Der Alpinismus. Kultur, Organisation, Politik, Vienna 1996, p. 259.
- ⁴² *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, 6th March 1921, p. 384.
- ⁴³ *Villacher Zeitung*, 17th March 1928, p. 5.
- ⁴⁴ *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, 6th March 1921, p.386.
- ⁴⁵ *Villacher Zeitung*, 12th Oct 1932, p. 1. For more information about the problematic nature of these celebrations, see Lisa Retzl, Opfergedenken und -denkmäler in der Zweiten Republik. Am Beispiel der Stadt Villach, in: Werner Koroschitz/Lisa Retzl (editors), „Heiß umfahdet, wild umstritten...“ Geschichtsmythen in Rot-Weiß-Rot, Villach–Klagenfurt 2005, pp. 155-187, here: p. 181 ff.
- ⁴⁶ On 19th June 1933 the NSDAP was prohibited by the Austrian Federal Government. Among other things, this was triggered by the increasing number of state-wide National Socialist terror attacks. In addition the dissolution of the militant SA and SS formations was ordered. In the lexicon of the National Socialists, this period from 1933 to 1938 was called the “period of prohibition”.
- ⁴⁷ Werner Drobosch, Vereine und Verbände in Kärnten (1848–1938). Vom Gemeinnützig-Geselligen zur Ideologisierung der Massen, Klagenfurt 1991, p. 262.
- ⁴⁸ Verdicts relating to participants in the November pogrom in Villach, in 1938, Volksgericht Graz, Senat Klagenfurt, Graz, 3rd July 1947. KLA, Villach Provincial Court, Z-Akten, 1692/47.
- ⁴⁹ Membership list, Villach Gymnastics Association, September 1952. KLA, Sicherheitsdirektion, Vereinsakten, Zl. 8133, Sch. 260.
- ⁵⁰ Cited in Wolfgang Neugebauer, Antisemitismus und Rechtsextremismus nach 1945: alte Stereotype– neue Propagandamuster, in: Jüdisches Museum der Stadt Wien (publisher), Macht der Bilder. Antisemitische Vorurteile und Mythen, Vienna 1995, pp.346-359, here: p. 350.
- ⁵¹ See Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus, published by Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance Movement, Vienna 1993, p. 185.
- ⁵² *Profil*, 25th May 1981, p. 70.

Long before March 1938, anti-Semitism already had a greater presence in Carinthia's schools than in just about any other sector of everyday life. In many families and in public life anti-Semitism was propagandised and it was also 'lived out', so that children and young people internalised it and took it straight into the classrooms. In urban Carinthian schools, there were usually only one or two Jewish children – if any - in the same year group, and as a rule this made them even more likely to assume the role of outsider. They were defenceless and ridiculed by their classmates. Leo Fischbach, who had attended primary school in Villach in the 1920s, still needed to talk about his painful and humiliating experiences many decades later:

“When I entered the classroom for the first time, my classmates greeted me with ‘little Jew, little Jew, het het het, pork makes little Jews fat.’ This was ... I just can't forget this. But that was only the start.”¹

Nor could Jewish schoolboys and girls even expect any protection from the majority of the teaching staff. Quite the opposite, even from this quarter they were often exposed to further harassment. From as early as the 1920s, the German-Nationalist Teachers' Federation had many more members than its Social-Democratic counterpart. As Walter Friedländer of Klagenfurt recalled in an interview: “the very language, and the way they talked allowed us to spot the Nazis among the teachers”.²

Fritz Reinisch had spent his schooldays in Klagenfurt as the only Jewish pupil in his class, at about the same time as Walter Friedländer. This is what he reported about his experiences and feelings, against a background situation that was becoming increasingly distressing for Jewish people:

“Sometimes they wouldn't let me go on school trips. My classmates thought this completely normal - and I'm conscious to this day that even I had similar feelings. Later, at secondary school I got the worst mark for a test, even though the teacher hadn't identified a single spelling mistake or any other error. I know I wasn't a very good school student, but German was my best subject. A complaint to the school Principal was met with a shrug of the shoulders – he couldn't contradict a professor. On another occasion during morning break, the son of a retailer's family, who was a few years older than me, punched me in the face for no reason. It made me dizzy for a few minutes – I complained to his form teacher who, together with his class, just laughed and did nothing about it.”³

Leo Fischbach, who at the end of the 1920s attended the Villach Peraugymnasium, also recalled the predominantly anti-Semitic mood during his days at the grammar school:

“Once our German teacher - his name was Schnehen - set us the assignment of speaking about a topic of our choice. At the time the film *Ben Hur* was being shown in the Villach cinema, and when he asked me what I'd like to speak about I said: *Ben Hur*. He made a note of it and at the end of the lesson my classmate Wunderer stood up and said: ‘We will not allow *Ben Hur* to be discussed because it is a glorification of Jews!’ Back then I was as

strong as a bull, and I grabbed Wunderer and pinioned him against the blackboard. Then Schnehen got hold of me and yelled: 'Fischbach, don't be such a hothead!' On another occasion our history teacher asked each of us what we planned to do after finishing lower school. (...) And I said: 'I shall go to Vienna, to attend the Textile School.' His comment in reply to this was: 'Well, we're really pleased to be getting rid of you.'"⁴

Dr. Ernst Singer, the only Jew among the teachers at Peraugymnasium, also had to suffer anti-Semitism from some of his colleagues. Born on 7th April 1891 in Theresienstadt, he had studied Mathematics and Physics in Prague and Graz. From 1920 he taught these two subjects at Peraugymnasium. At the beginning of December 1933 he committed suicide in the school's conference room.

A commemorative paper to mark the Grammar School's 125th anniversary remarked that Singer had not been able to cope with "the spiteful scheming of opponents. Because he was of Jewish extraction, he did not fit in with their view of things from the perspective of race".⁵ On 7th February 1934 the *Freie Stimmen* newspaper gave a detailed report of a parents' meeting at the Grammar School, in the course of which the teacher's death was again addressed:

"A considerable portion of the discussion was devoted to the question of the three professors being transferred to other schools, allegedly in connection with Professor Dr. Singer's tragic death. (...) The chairman reported that immediately after hearing of the Minister of Education's intention to transfer the aforementioned three professors, the Executive Board of the parents' association had taken steps, by way of the Reich's Federation of Parents' Associations, to try and keep these commendable teachers at the school.(...). Unfortunately these efforts had been unsuccessful."⁶

Immediately after the "Anschluss" in March 1938 the National Socialists moved to "purify" the school system, seeing it as the most important instrument of social conditioning. During the course of this process, Jewish and Christian-Socialist teachers were swiftly ejected from the teaching profession. They were replaced by avowed National Socialists and any religious subject matters and symbols were banned from the classrooms. Karl Kmeth taught Geography and History at Peraugymnasium grammar school and was moved in Christian-Socialist circles. He foresaw what would happen to him after the regime change and he took his own life on 14th March 1938.⁷

Four days later the civil servants and employees of the municipality of Villach assembled, along with Municipal Education Authority teachers, to swear loyalty to Adolf Hitler.⁸ And on 21st March 1938 the first school day after the "Anschluss" was celebrated in all Villach schools:

"From the Grammar School building the new flags fluttered in the wind, proudly and victoriously. Professor Dr. Walter Fresacher, was ceremoniously paraded in by a Hitler Youth Group as a veteran campaigner. He made a fiery speech, looking back over the difficulties of the past; he explained the significance of the great things happening around us now; and he told us we could only thank the Führer for all this, because he was realising the dream of thousands of years."⁹

It did not take long for initial instructions to come down from the Ministry of Education. First were the order to display images of Hitler in all school rooms and administrative offices and the introduction into schools of the Hitler salute. In the relevant Carinthian Education Authority decree it was stipulated:

“At the beginning of each lesson the teacher will first greet the standing class, by raising his right arm and saying the words ‘Heil Hitler’; the pupils will then reciprocate by raising their right arm and saying the words ‘Heil Hitler’. The teacher will conclude the lesson by instructing the class to stand and then raising his right arm and saying the words ‘Heil Hitler’. The class will reciprocate in similar fashion. Otherwise, pupils will greet members of teaching staff on school premises, only by raising their right arm in an appropriately respectful manner.

(...) It is furthermore to be noted that non-Aryan students are not required to give the German salute.”¹⁰

Children and young people were relentlessly sworn in with oaths to the Führer and to the ideologies of the German Reich. “It is such good fortune that we have our Führer; he will soon show those evil Czechs, Jews, Americans, Communists and clerics”¹¹, remarked Erika Mann. She was an émigré journalist writing with heavy irony in her book *Zehn Millionen Kinder (Ten Millions of Children)* first published in 1938, about the way the National Socialists brought up young people. On 8th April 1938 the Reich youth leader, Baldur von Schirach travelled to Villach to give an inflammatory speech on the Hauptplatz and uncompromisingly to swear in the young people to respect for National Socialist objectives. On occasion of the now routine “Führer’s birthday” celebrations, Bernhard Rust, the Reich Education Minister, unmistakably spelt out what was expected:

“Whatever we hope for and expect from the Germany of the future must be fulfilled by you, boys and girls. (...) You are the Germany of the future and consequently the way we want you to be, is how that Germany of the future at once should be and must be.”¹²

Indeed, those words were followed by deeds. On the afternoon of 30th April 1938 books hostile to the system, especially books of Jewish and Catholic provenance, were ritually burned in the Peraugymnasium school yard. This was a knowingly choreographed performance, with an ideological message that was supposed literally to be burnt into the consciousness of the young:

“One day our classroom teachers told us that all pupils in the higher forms had to be at school in the late afternoon. In the afternoon, we duly gathered in the school yard, where the teachers were already waiting for us. The caretaker had prepared a big pile of wood, and we had to gather round it, forming a square – with one side left open. A few teachers were present too. Then the caretaker set fire to the woodpile. Shortly afterwards the Principal arrived from the school building through a side door. He was carrying some books under his arm. Slowly he approached the fire, stopping a few metres from it. He then took one book after another from under his arm and, in very dignified manner, threw it into the flames. We applauded and cheered each one. Afterwards the Principal gave a short speech and we were allowed to return home.”¹³

The curriculum content was adapted to fit the new political guidelines. Kindergarten and primary school children already started to get a flavour of National Socialist concepts of race through the medium of child-friendly literature. For instance the book entitled *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid' und keinem Jud' bei seinem Eid* (Don't Trust Any Fox in Open Country And Don't Trust Any Jew on His Oath), written and illustrated by Elvira Bauer (Stürmer Publishing House, first published 1936), served to guide the imagination of the little ones in the desired direction, using a simple, strongly emotive picture language.¹⁴

Teaching in specialist disciplines German, Biology, History, Geography and 'Leibeserziehung' (physical education) – a National Socialist term that the Austrian school system kept after 1945 – was regarded as fundamental. Teaching biology took such a prominent role in this, because it was expected to offer interdisciplinary links in the particular context of prevalent racist doctrines.¹⁵ A Carinthian School Authority decree issued in 1938 stated in relation to this topic:

“By means of (...) nature study related to the homeland, children will be able to articulate their own place in the life of their people and the responsibilities resulting from it. In the process a base will be prepared for instruction in the study of race and racial hygiene. Heredity Studies summarises in simple form the essentials of Mendel's Laws; it makes clear just how significant morphology and selection are in the laws of life.”¹⁶

A month later the Carinthian School Authority issued a decree recommending that all school students should read a special issue of *The Stürmer* magazine, entitled *Die Kriegshetzer* (The Warmongers). The aim was to let the children see for themselves how “from time immemorial it has been the Jew's objective systematically to eradicate the Aryan peoples, and furthermore the Jew has used great world wars to secure his own domination over the world”.¹⁷ The students' orders for this work were to be collected in each school and forwarded by the Principal's office to *The Stürmer's* business premises.

Apart from the rapid launch of a National Socialist curriculum, immediately after the “Anschluss” segregation of Jewish school students began, above all in Vienna. These students were concentrated into separate schools or school classes. From that autumn, that is from the 1938/39 school year, joint teaching of Jewish alongside non-Jewish school students was prohibited in all public and private schools. By a decree of 21st October 1938 only so-called “mixed-race” students were still allowed to attend “German” schools. Moreover, the total number of Jewish school students was without further ado markedly reduced so that from autumn 1938 there was only one Jewish grammar school and one Jewish School of Economics in Vienna. This meant de facto termination of school education for many Jewish students. Cynically it was pointed out that the curriculum in these schools paid especial attention to the students' “emigration requirements”.¹⁸

Walter Friedländer reported that his Klagenfurt schoolmates left him alone as soon as it became apparent that he would emigrate with his family to Palestine. Instead of him they started having a go at another schoolmate who supposedly looked Jewish - “until the teacher (...) explained the theory of race to us: ‘It can also happen that sometimes two blonde parents have a child with black hair’.”¹⁹

¹ Leo Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 4th Aug 2003.

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- ² Digital testimony of Walter Friedländer. Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 0.93 Survivors of the Shoah, Item 7389865.
- ³ Letter from Fritz Reinisch to Alexandra Schmidt, Boca Raton, 17th July 2013. After emigrating to the U.S.A., Fritz Reinisch changed his forename to Fred.
- ⁴ Leo Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 4th Aug 2003.
- ⁵ Johannes Buchacher, 125 Jahre Gymnasium Perau. Zur Geschichte der Schule, Villach 1994, p. 17.
- ⁶ *Freie Stimmen*, 7th Feb 1934, p. 6.
- ⁷ *Kärntner Volkszeitung*, 16th March 1938, p. 7.
- ⁸ *Freie Stimmen*, 22nd March 1938, p.15.
- ⁹ *Kärntner Volkszeitung*, 26th March 1938, p. 13.
- ¹⁰ Carinthian Education Authority decree No 19, issued in March 1938 (precise date not given). KLA, Holdings of the Carinthian Education Authority, Fasc. 98, School Ordinance gazettes 1937–1938.
- ¹¹ Erika Mann, Zehn Millionen Kinder. Die Erziehung der Jugend im Dritten Reich, Hamburg 2011, p. 26.
- ¹² *Freie Stimmen*, 22nd April 1938, p. 4.
- ¹³ Anton Engelhart interviewed by Hans Haider, Villach, September 1998. Cited in Hans Haider, Nationalsozialismus in Villach, Villach 2005, p. 53.
- ¹⁴ Erika Mann, Zehn Millionen Kinder, p. 66.
- ¹⁵ For more information see Matthias Schwerendt, "Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid, und keinem Jud' bei seinem Eid". Antisemitismus in nationalsozialistischen Schulbüchern und Unterrichtsmaterialien, Berlin 2009, pp. 99 ff.
- ¹⁶ Carinthian School Authority decree No 88, 23rd Sept 1938. KLA, Holding of the Carinthian School Authority, Fasc. 98, School Ordinance gazettes 1937–1938.
- ¹⁷ Carinthian School Authority decree No 112 by the, from 28th Oct 1938. KLA, Holding of the Carinthian School Authority, Fasc.98, School Ordinance gazettes 1937–1938.
- ¹⁸ *Freie Stimmen*, 16th June 1938, p. 3.
- ¹⁹ Digital Testimony of Walter Friedländer. Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 0.93 Survivors of the Shoah, Item 7389865.

The 1938 “Anschluss” (“Annexation”)

Steps to disenfranchisement

The promotion of high-ranking Carinthian NS party officials, such as Friedrich Rainer and Hubert Klausner, to party headquarters in Vienna in February 1938 gave them access to advance information about current political developments. News of imminent invasion by German troops was swiftly passed on to their old homeland and the southernmost Austrian Gau (NS administrative region) was proud to be the first amongst the Austrian provinces to be able to announce that the takeover had been completed.¹ Within hours the manifestly well prepared National Socialists occupied the provincial nerve centres and seized power. Even Oskar Kraus, who had significantly contributed to political developments in Villach, was astonished by the smoothness with which the operation went; as he said when thinking back to it from the 1960’s:

“During the evening hours of 11th March 1938 the first Swastika flags were displayed and a crowd of people joyously surged through the streets of the city. The number of flags visibly increased - we just wondered about those masses of flags and wherever they could possibly have come from. In the late hours of the evening, a massive torchlight procession was set in motion through the city, headed by the Wehrmacht. In a kind of spiritual enthusiasm, boundless jubilation thrilled through the length and breadth of the city. Tears of joy from men and women alike bore witness to just how overwhelming this proud moment was. Now was realised what thousands upon thousands of people – including so many Villach men and women - had fought for, suffered and lost their livelihoods for, had languished in prison and the concentration camps for. All this, only because they desperately wanted to be ‘back to the Reich’ of Adolf Hitler, the great German Führer”.²

The people’s enthusiasm was accompanied by spontaneous outbreaks of the kinds of anti-Jewish disturbances associated with pogroms. Now that it had “returned home” the Volk outdid itself in conspicuous spitefulness. These Austria-wide excesses against the Jewish population needed no veneer of legality – and locally, under the leadership of Gauleiter (regional leader) Josef Bürckel, the outrages had been geared up within a few days, in a way that would have needed years of preparation under the so-called “Altreich” (Nazi Germany before 1938). Filled with consternation in the face of the riots, plundering and humiliations taking place in Austria, the *New York Times* got to the heart of the matter on 23rd March 1938: “In only 14 days it has proved possible to subject the Jews to an incomparably harsher regime, than was achieved in Germany in a year.”³

It was still the evening of 11th March 1938 when Nazi troops launched a search for the scattering of Jews unwise enough to be out on the streets of Villach.⁴ During the days that followed political opponents, as well as Jews, were taken into temporary “Schutzhaft” (protective custody) in the Provincial Court Prisons: on the one hand for intimidation purposes, whilst on the other for getting a precise picture of their financial circumstances.⁵ The illustrative example of what Villach notary Dr. Egon Weissberger went through allows us

to reconstruct the situation at the time. In his capacity as a Jewish district leader of the Vaterländische (Nationalist) Front, he was from the very beginning part of the inner circle of persons liable to persecution. As a lawyer he already had a sense of the measures about to be implemented; so straightaway, in his office during the night of 11th to 12th March, he burned all his politically incriminating papers.⁶

Just two days later he was arrested and taken to Villach police prison. During the following two weeks that he spent in prison, his livelihood was systematically destroyed: whilst in prison he was divested of his position as notary and compelled, in the presence of Alois Kraker (then President of the Chamber), to hand over his office to a career- and NS Party-oriented successor.⁷ Moreover, the solicitor Dr. Max di Gaspero turned up in the prison, to demand payment of debts on behalf of a client. In the presence of the Gestapo (Secret State Police) the solicitor demanded from Weissberger that he transfer his property in Duell above Velden. Worn down by his imprisonment, where the highly educated notary was forced to wash cars⁸, Weissberger was practically incapable of influencing events: for one thing, it became impossible for him to manage his financial affairs from prison, and for another, the Gestapo had already frozen all Jewish bank accounts on 13th March 1938. As if that were not enough, some of his debtors immediately took advantage of his predicament and no longer met their payment obligations. On 29th March 1938 the property purchase contract arrived at Villach police prison for signing – and on that same day Weissberger was released from prison.⁹

These kinds of actions were made possible by the prompt establishment of an operationally efficient, province-wide security and terror network.

Again on 11th March, the SA and SS had been legalised with lightning speed and placed on an equal footing with the previous executive authority. A few days later full responsibility for political and public security in Carinthia was transferred to the Reich-German Gestapo official, SS Obersturmführer Dr. Erich Isselhorst.¹⁰ From March to June 1938 he was in charge of setting up the Klagenfurt Gestapo bureau and he also personally became leader of Department II (countering opponents of the regime).

Amongst his entourage was the Viennese-born, Dr. Johann Bauer, who was in charge of interrogations and investigations for Department II, before succeeding Isselhorst as Head of Department in August 1938. In this capacity he was almost exclusively occupied with “Jewish matters”. At the same time SS Sturmbannführer Dr. Ernst Weimann took over the Gestapo leadership in Carinthia, whilst Isselhorst was ordered back to the “Altreich” (German pre-1938 territory).¹¹

The local National Socialists worked rapidly, efficiently and with an astonishing bureaucratic precision. In the first week after taking power they started to eject all opponents of the regime and “Volksschädlinge” (parasites on the People) from public offices, administrative organisations, cultural and educational institutions and even from private enterprises. They were replaced by NSDAP party members. Many Jewish employees, such as some railway staff, were faced with instant dismissal without compensation. This was assisted by the decree concerning maintenance of “Security and Order”, issued by Reich Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, on 20th March 1938. It stipulated that all measures could be implemented even outside of the framework of legality.¹²

The “reorganisation of officialdom” was tackled immediately and, during the course of it, there were various amendments to laws, stipulating that henceforth no Jewish civil servants should be sworn in. Jewish civil servants already in employment had to retire immediately with reduced income. Full salaries were only protected – at least for the time being - for Jews

who had seen service in the First World War.¹³ In parallel to ejection from certain occupations, all associations judged subversive were dissolved and this also included all Jewish associations and organisations. In Carinthia the first to be affected were the Federation of Jewish Front-line Soldiers, the Klagenfurt Section of the Provincial Zionist Association - Austria, as well as the Regional Branch of Zionist Women. Club funds were confiscated by the Gestapo.¹⁴

On 20th May 1938 the Nuremberg Racial Laws were introduced into what had formerly been the Austrian territories. In Germany these laws had already come into force in 1935. They included the "Reich Citizenship Law", stipulating that only "Aryan" citizens should have full civil rights, whereas other ethnic minorities should be granted the residence status of foreigners, without voting rights. Typically, this law was already being enforced before it was officially introduced in Austria, namely in relation to the referendum of 10th April 1938, when the Jewish population was denied a vote.

The so-called "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour", in short called the "Blutschutzgesetz", criminalised marriages and extra-marital intercourse between "Aryans" and "non-Aryans". The Race Laws specified in punctilious detail who was henceforth to be considered a "full Jew" or "mixed-blood" to the first or second degree. This put a de jure end to flexibility in Jewish conceptions of their own identity. Now it no longer mattered whether one was Orthodox, liberal, atheist or convert – only the criterion of race decided one's future destiny. This embedding of racial theory inexorably paved the way for National Socialist extermination policies.

Immediately after the "Anschluss" members of certain professional groups (e.g. the military, civil servants) were required to present a so-called "Aryan Passport" – a certified pedigree. Because of this, a number of people only now found out about their Jewish ancestry or relatives. The introduction of the Race Laws, and now the need for an "Aryan Passport", led to drastic upheavals and changes in people's lives – among them even some National Socialists, as can be seen from this excerpt from a letter of 4th April 1938 from a Klagenfurt citizen to his family in Wels:

"Dear Heinrich and Poldi,

Many thanks for all your efforts regarding the documents, which bring such terribly clear news for my poor Trude and myself. (...) We had still hoped that perhaps only grandmother was Jewish, but now everything has been brought out into the open. Father should at least have told us the truth before we married. The analysis in the letter you and Rudi sent is something of a consolation, but in terms of the Nuremberg Laws this does not help at all. (...) I have also made enquiries with the Military: every man is required to present this [an Aryan Passport, editor's note], otherwise he will be dismissed. What kind of a beggar's pension am I supposed to get? No, I can't let this happen, because as soon as the slightest rumours about us got out in Klagenfurt, everything would be over and they would all give us the cold shoulder. (...) My whole life I have been a nationalist and didn't have a clue about my true blood line; I was a member of the Party even at a time when it was still prohibited; I've been decent my whole life long and then from one moment to the next everything is finished, with the curse of those kind people: 'he too is of Jewish descent'."¹⁵

On the whole the Jewish population was confronted with a raft of new legislation ordering their professional, economic and social disenfranchisement. Apart from the prohibition on visiting parks, swimming pools and other public facilities, they were also, among other

things, forbidden to wear traditional Carinthian costume. The ban on keeping carrier pigeons was not enforced in Austria, but only in the “Altreich”.

In November 1938 the Villach couple Wilhelm and Maria Gornik were forced out of the flat in Weißbriachgasse road where they had lived for nineteen years. Their landlord – a self-professed National Socialist – “no longer wanted to live under the same roof as a Jewish woman”¹⁶. The new regulations, decrees and laws more or less put a stop to the previously shared communal life of the Jewish and non-Jewish populations. Few people still remained in contact with Jewish friends and acquaintances. The majority either aligned themselves with the National Socialists or withdrew for fear of possible reprisals.

As Fritz Reinisch from Klagenfurt, who in March 1938 was attending school in Vienna, recalls:

“I had a playmate the same age as myself – he was in and out of our house as if it was his home, and it was the same with me at his place. After the Anschluss I was in Klagenfurt for a short while, and I saw him in the street – he ignored me completely – that hurt.”¹⁷

The anti-Jewish laws were accompanied by corresponding propaganda activities. In Austrian cinemas large numbers of anti-Semitic films were shown. On 3rd August 1938 Reich Governor Arthur Seyss-Inquart launched the travelling exhibition *Der ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew)*, displayed in the hall of Vienna’s Nordwestbahnhof railway station. Yet the site had not been chosen at random. At the beginning of the 20th century thousands of Jewish refugees had arrived from all parts of the monarchy at that particular railway station. By using stereotyped picture language and topics such as “The Jews and Jewish lackeys on summer holiday in Dachau”, the exhibition aimed at setting at rest the minds of those viewers still afflicted by moral scruples. By October 1938 as many as 350,000 people had seen the exhibition, and it was mandatory for school students. Any Carinthians who did not get the opportunity to see the exhibition in Vienna were compensated by the propaganda film *Juden ohne Maske (Jews Unmasked)* shown everywhere in Carinthia from September 1938.

¹ August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich*, Klagenfurt 2009, p. 139.

² Oskar Kraus, *Lebenserinnerungen*, in: Werner Koroschitz/Lisa Rettl (editors), Oskar Kraus. NS-Oberbürgermeister von Villach. Kärntner Erinnerungsk(r)ämpfe, Klagenfurt/Celovec 2006, pp. 175-228, here: p. 187.

³ Cited in Hazel Rosenstrauch, *Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden*, Berlin 1988, p. 134.

⁴ Alois Buttinger, *A Letter for My Grandchildren. Autobiographical Notes and Commentary*, no place, 1980, p. 289.

⁵ Alexander Verdnik, *Arisierung in Kärnten. Die Enteignung jüdischen Besitzes 1938–1945*, Phil. doctoral thesis, Graz 2013, p. 64.

⁶ Testimony of Egon Weissberger, to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, 7th Oct 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 10/48, Sch. 17.

⁷ Arabella Weissberger, to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 23rd May 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 148/49, Sch. 43.

⁸ Testimony of Father Franz Kaleja, to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, 5th Aug. 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 9/48, Sch. 17.

⁹ Egon Weissberger, to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 5th Jan 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 10/48, Sch. 17.

¹⁰ In 1946 Erich Isselhorst was sentenced to death by a British Military Court. After escaping from military prison he was caught and again sentenced to death by a French military court. On 23rd February 1948 the sentence was executed in Straßburg.

¹¹ August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten*, pp. 143 f.

¹² Reich gazette I 262, gazette for the Province of Austria 37/1938.

¹³ *Kärntner Volkszeitung*, 19th March 1938, p. 2. *Freie Stimmen*, 26th May 1938, p. 2.

¹⁴ August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten*, p. 147.

¹⁵ Letter from a Klagenfurt citizen, to his family living in Wels, Klagenfurt, 4th April 1938, Archive Yad Vashem (Jerusalem), O 48 Miscellaneous Documents Collection, File 14625. The precise identity of the person writing the letter is unknown.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

¹⁷ Letter from Fritz Reinisch to Alexandra Schmidt, Boca Raton, 14th Aug 2013.

The physical annihilation of the Austrian Jews was preceded by their social and economic destruction. Right from 12th March 1938 the local National Socialists set about acquiring Jewish property by multifarious ways and means. Sham house searches looking for alleged incriminating evidence, weapons, as well as gold and currency stocks were the first pretext for looting and confiscating valuables - which disappeared for good, in most cases, into the pockets of the SS and SA men. Now the doors were opened wide for denunciation and blackmail. In anticipation of material gain, the Austrian “Volksgenossen” (local populace) delivered their Jewish neighbours into the hands of the Gestapo, or otherwise threatened to report them, if they refused to hand over their various valuables – a tried and tested strategy which also worked now that widespread competition for Jewish property had broken out. It was all about thwarting any rivals. Last but not least, with denunciations and slanders, people tried to get into the new political élite’s good books.

An example is the case of the Villach resident Maria Gornik. She was the owner of the licensed lottery shop on Widmannngasse (street), and “immediately after the German invasion” she was reported to the Gestapo, for listening to foreign radio channels. Maria Gornik was promptly arrested and her radio was “confiscated” – a euphemism for NS authorities stealing other people’s property.¹

To hasten the economic ruin of Jewish shop-owners, at first anti-Jewish slogans were daubed on their windows, or the windows were pasted over. Usually SA guards were stationed in front of the shops, to prevent “Aryan” customers from entering “Jewish” businesses. These intimidatory measures were addressed equally at Jewish people and at members of the majority population, who might wish to demonstrate solidarity with those affected:

“[F]rom March 1938 all the ‘Jewish shops’ were singled out, in that the word ‘Jude’ (Jew) was daubed on them. Shopping there was prohibited. People who still dared to go there were held to account. Once I noticed three of four people - they were not from Villach – being led down the main square. All of them had boards around their neck saying: ‘This Aryan bastard does his shopping at Jewish stores’.”²

Terms such as “de-Jewification” and “Aryanisation” had their ideological roots in 1920s völkisch anti-Semitism, when the demand to drive the Jews right out of economic life was voiced for the first time.³ Over the years, the expropriation of Jewish property went through several phases, based on a variety of legal and political pretexts. Different protagonists were involved and their motivation and room for manoeuvre were very varied. The beneficiaries of “Aryanisation” from March 1938 were the State with all its institutions and organisations, together with the cities and municipalities, the NSDAP and its associations, deserving National Socialist Party members, as well as private individuals of all social strata.

In the “March days” of 1938, “Aryanisation” still meant arbitrary raids and looting that were not yet covered by uniform laws throughout the Reich. “Veterans of the Struggle” and deserving Party members were usually the beneficiaries of these spontaneous actions. They regarded stolen Jewish property as a reward for their illegal political activities between 1933

and 1938. These “illegals” considered it first and foremost an appropriate form of “compensation”.

Apart from amongst those particularly favoured by the NS system, the hunt for Jewish property was taken up by persons from all levels of society: unscrupulous neighbours and determined opportunists in the role of “provisional administrators” took advantage of the moment, every bit as shamelessly as did members of the “Aryan” mercantile community. Thanks to this unprecedented appropriation of other people’s property, many individuals succeeded in advancing their careers and climbing the social ladder. In the process, an appreciable number of Austrians laid the foundations of the wealth and prosperity that they still live off today.

The National Socialist associations also wanted to be rewarded for their efforts. For example, in April 1938 the Hitler Youth laid claim to *Villa Erika*, as a reward for their association activities. The villa happened to be the property of Arabella Weissberger, the wife of the Villach notary, Dr. Egon Weissberger.

Remarkably enough, this acquisition was at first prevented by a resolute stand from the villa’s tenant, Wilhelm Kuckh, a retired Colonel. But soon the local National Socialists unleashed a terror campaign against the family, as well as the Colonel; it was so severe that Arabella Weissberger finally found herself forced to sell her villa.⁴

Dr. Ludwig Biró, a prominent lawyer from Graz, represented a number of Villach Jews at the “Rückstellungsverfahren” (restitution proceedings) after 1945. He had also been a victim of National Socialist persecution and he recorded a compelling account of his personal impressions and experiences:

“The time of “Aryanisation” had come, unleashing a fierce competition among hungry Party members, both young and old; corruption thrived on a hitherto unimaginable scale. Long promised and greatly coveted, the Jewish shops and businesses were the first prey, and Hitler himself could not have snatched the victim from the vultures. They set aside all their inhibitions; any feelings of shame were dead. Employees from chauffeurs upwards single-handedly showed their former bosses the door; book-keepers took advantage of their intimate knowledge of certain business secrets, so that they could receive as ‘a present’ the most valuable carpets, pictures and jewellery from the apartments of the masters, whom they had fawned upon only a day before. Friends, who had been round to supper the previous evening, were now only interested in the latest balance-sheet, with the excuse that it would be best to see the business transferred into the safe hands of good friends like themselves!”⁵

The outbreaks of robbery in Austria, with the local National Socialists “rampaging Aryanisations” went to such lengths that they even surprised Josef Bürckel, Reichskommissionar for the Reunification of Austria with the German Reich. In a letter to Göring he admitted that:

“The glorious history of National Socialism and the rising in Austria has been somewhat tarnished by the extent of the robbery and theft that has occurred during the first weeks.”⁶

So, the Reich leadership tried to stop uncoordinated raids and to steer the acquisition of Jewish assets into controlled channels. To secure the expropriated wealth for the State, there were interventions from Berlin and an attempt to ensure the fastest possible legal

containment of the “Austrian provisional administration”. Nevertheless, the “wilde” (rampaging) expropriations continued.

On 26th April 1938, the Reich leadership therefore issued a “Decree Concerning the Registration of the Property of Jews”. Its purpose was to secure any Jewish wealth that had not yet been embezzled by the Reich’s departments and provisional administrators. By compiling an inventory and register of Jewish assets, systematic theft from Jews was now brought under State control.

Jewish people had until the end of July 1938 to declare their property, if its value exceeded 5,000 Reichmarks. The resulting inventory of assets provided the Reich leadership with an exact overview of the Jews’ working capital, houses and real estate, cash and savings, professional income, pensions, shares and jewellery.

When false declarations were made, the penalties were fines, up to ten years’ imprisonment, penitentiary sentences, as well as confiscation of property.

A further step towards perfecting systematic state-controlled robbery was the establishment of the Property Transactions Office (VVSt) on 18th May 1938. This agency now assumed official responsibility for implementing “Aryanisation”. A branch of the VVSt, under the Directorate of Alois Winkler, was set up in Klagenfurt to oversee the “de-Jewification” of the Carinthian economy. Winkler was abetted by his party comrade, Matthias Hoi, who became official-in-charge. “Aryanisation” initiatives were now subject to the approval of both men, whilst it fell to local NSDAP officials to check the political reliability of the “Aryanisers”. The Property Transactions Office (VVSt) appointed “provisional managers/administrators”, “trustees” and “liquidators” for business enterprises and determined the “purchase price” of Jewish properties.

Of course, the appointed accountants’ estimates and economic reports usually valued Jewish enterprises and/or properties at well below their true market worth. The authorised experts were eager to comply with their employers’ wishes by producing obliging reports. In most cases, the Jewish enterprise to be “Aryanised” was represented as a business on the brink of bankruptcy. In due course, a “purchase price” was fixed, which was what the “Aryanisers” had to pay – along with an “Aryanisation surplus” that went to the State, as a commission for facilitating the favourable purchase conditions.

Usually less than half of the value of the business assets was paid, meaning the “purchaser” benefitted enormously from the substantial difference between the real value and the actual “purchase price”. And the State also made money, because of the “Aryanisation surplus”. The Jewish owners, who had been forced to sell, went away empty-handed from the whole process, because the entire “purchase proceeds” were transferred to a frozen bank account over which they had no power of access.

The fiscal authority then deducted Reich Emigration Tax from the frozen funds in the Jewish account, as they did subsequently for the Jewish Property Tax (JUVA). Alternatively, the fiscal authority withheld docked fictitious, accumulated tax arrears or other compulsory levies from the account. Of what remained, only very small amounts were released to the Jewish “seller” so that he/she could pay for the bare necessities of subsistence or for emigration. On “emigration” – which could hardly be seen as voluntary - the final outcome was total forfeiture of property.⁷

Under the direction of the newly created “Property Transactions Office”, it was the task of the “provisional administrators” either to sell the relevant assets to a non-Jewish bidder (meaning the property was “Aryanised”), or to disaggregate them for piece-meal sales (the property was “liquidated”).

In Carinthia the number of “Aryanisations” and “liquidations” was roughly the same⁸, although it was almost irrelevant to the victims affected whether their former business was kept going by an “Aryaniser” or liquidated. The decision mainly depended on the positioning of the business in question, because liquidating a business in some business sectors could be a way of eliminating unwelcome competition. There were, of course, clear winners from business liquidations too, because in these instances the stock of the relevant Jewish company was disaggregated and could be sold on by the “provisional administrators” for next to nothing, to members of the “völkisch community”.

So shoes, textiles and tableware that had been bought for peanuts, were carried off wholesale, by the truckful and the cartload. Debtors refused to repay outstanding sums to their Jewish creditors. Whilst on the other hand “Aryan” creditors demanded immediate repayment of debts from former business partners, who had in the mean time been ostracised.

“ARYANISATIONS” IN THE FOOTWEAR SECTOR

The *Aeterna Schuhfabriks AG* was one of Austria’s biggest manufacturers of footwear. The majority of the business was Jewish-owned. From March 1938 onwards it immediately became the object of fierce contests between rival interest groups. By buying up Jewish-held shares, various large corporations hoped to extend their market-share. A significant part was played in this by the *Creditanstalt-Bankverein (CA)* bank, itself a shareholder in the business. The bank was granted fiduciary administration of the majority Jewish-held shares, so that *Aeterna* became entitled to use the name “Aryan enterprise” from as early as 21st May 1938.

Aeterna also held seventy-five percent of the share capital in the *Paga Schuh-Vertriebs (footwear manufacturers) GmbH*, which had more than seventeen sales outlets in Austria, and an annual total turnover of a million Schillings. The two enterprises had a supply agreement, under which *Paga* procured seventy percent of its footwear products from *Aeterna*. The already “Aryanised” *Aeterna* forced *Paga*’s two Jewish managing directors to resign in June 1938. And so, the shares held by *Paga*’s Jewish co-partners were also “Aryanised”.⁹

The speed and thoroughness of “Aryanisation” in Austria were held up as an example for the whole German Reich. In contrast to Germany, where “de-Jewification of the economy” proceeded relatively slowly, in former Austrian territory there were hardly any Jewish businesses left by as soon as 1940. The “Ostmark” (as Austria was known in the Reich) provided the “Altreich” with valuable impetus and new ideas about implement “de-Jewification”.¹⁰

Immediately after the November pogrom in 1938, Hermann Göring saw his chance to implement his demand for the final removal of the Jews from economic life. On occasion of a meeting at the Reich Ministry of Aviation on 12th November 1938, he complained about the material damage done to the “Volk’s assets” during the pogroms and demanded that all Jewish enterprises should be subjected to “forced-Aryanisation”. In the process Göring also expressed his determination to stop the arbitrary actions of Austrian party members in relation to the “Judenfrage” (the Jewish question) and to ensure that Party members in lower and medium positions could not unduly enrich themselves through “de-Jewification”. He went on to refer to the idea of forced sale of Jewish enterprises, which should be merged into “Aryan” property through the mediation of trustees. He further pointed out that following

the exemplary implementation of “de-Jewification” in Austria, it was now a top priority to “Aryanise” the outward appearance of Jewish enterprises and shops, in order to remove any incitements to further rioting. Göring declared he would combat any kind of corruption amongst “the Gauleiter (regional leaders) and Governors”.¹¹ On the same day the “Decree Concerning the Elimination of Jewish People from German Economic Life” was issued. Also on the 12th November, on the occasion of the death of the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath, the Jewish population was burdened with paying one billion Reichsmarks as an act of reparation, for the “hostile attitude of Jewry towards the German Volk”. The “Decree Concerning the Act of Reparation by the Jews of German Citizenship” was also signed by Göring, who desperately needed the money for the tight arms budget. On 18th November 1938 a representative of the Foreign Office reported Göring’s assessment briefly and succinctly:

“Very critical situation of Reich finances. First remedy through the billion the Jews have to pay and the Reich’s gains through Aryanisation of Jewish enterprises.”¹²

The proponents of a radical “Jewish policy”, first amongst them Joseph Goebbels, were also satisfied, as is demonstrated by an entry in the Propaganda Minister’s diary:

“Conference at Göring’s about the Jewish question. Heated struggles for a solution. I adopt a radical stance. Result: the Jews will be forced to contribute a billion. They will completely quit economic life as soon as possible. They can no longer run businesses. A whole raft of such measures is still planned. Anyway now we are wiping the slate clean. Radical opinion has won.”¹³

The “de-Jewification profit” resulting from all this amounted to several billions of Reichsmarks. They were injected into the Reich’s finances, now running out-of-control. In the 1938 financial year alone, the income from the Reich Emigration Tax, levied on Jews leaving the country, and the Jewish Property Tax amounted to five percent of total fiscal revenues. This is before factoring in the quarter of a billion Reichsmarks that flowed into State coffers, as a result of insurance benefits being withheld for damage to Jewish property in the course of the November pogrom.¹⁴

The Reich government’s intent to secure State access to Jewish wealth through “compulsory Aryanisations” was enshrined in law as a way of legitimating these proceedings on 3rd December 1938 in the “Edict Concerning the Utilisation of Jewish Property”. This decree regulated future forced sales of Jewish enterprises and real estate and any other valuable assets. As examples from the Villach District show, from that date onwards the pressure on the Jewish population increased. From 1939, under the entry “Judaism” in *Meyers Lexikon* (encyclopaedia), one could already read that the National Socialists’ goals went far beyond “eliminating the Jews from economic life”. “National Socialism with its Nuremberg Laws has been the first to initiate a real and conclusive solution to the Jewish question for the German people; by means of the 1938 laws it has set, as the final goal, the total elimination of the Jews from Germany.”¹⁵ In the early days the context of associations around the phrase “elimination of the Jews” suggested forced emigrations of persons, whose property had been snatched away from them. Yet after the outbreak of war in September 1939, it became a matter of resetting the objective as their physical annihilation.

CASE STUDIES

Osias Fischbach

The retailer Osias Fischbach had moved to Villach in 1909, with his wife Mina and their children Rudolf and Ferdinand; at Italienerstraße 2 they opened a ready-to-wear outfitter's shop for men, women and children. Their third child, Elisabeth, was born in Villach.

In May 1938 the shop was doing well, but was placed in "provisional administration" and Osias Fischbach found that he was denied access. After the first administrator had been taken into police custody by the Gestapo, on grounds of theft and large-scale embezzlement, management of the store was transferred at the end of June 1938 to Otto Rawitzki. In September he was commissioned by the Property Transactions Office to oversee the shop's liquidation. After Rawitzki had secured the most elegant suits, shoes and damask fabrics for his personal use, a number of favoured Party minions also jumped on the bandwagon at the start of the sell-off.¹⁶

Josef Biedermann, a Villach master shoemaker, who had been recommended by the Villach NSDAP District Leadership, was allowed to snap up 2,500 pairs of shoes originally valued at 23,000 Reichsmarks. This was a kind of recompense for Biedermann, in recognition of his membership of the SA and/or the Party since right back in 1932 and it acknowledged the fact that he had received several prison sentences for illegal political activities.

Klagenfurt retailer Emmerich Schuscha acquired goods originally valued at 13,000 Reichsmarks, following the intervention of Matthias Hoi, an official of the Klagenfurt Property Transactions Office. Schuscha too had been an NSDAP member from as early as 1932, and from May 1938 he had become a member of the SA. In turn, District Business Consultant Hödl secured for his relative Rudolf Keimel, the owner of a Villach lingerie and knitwear store, goods valued at 9,000 Reichsmarks. Michael Sleik, a shopkeeper in Bleiberg-Kreuth, purchased a large quantity of textiles as well as the virtually new cash register, together valued at more than 22,000 Reichsmarks. Ernst Kofler, a Villach Lind retailer, acquired a small batch of goods at just under two hundred Reichsmarks.

In fact, the prices that these business people actually paid for their goods amounted to a reduction of up to fifty percent or more on their original market valuation. Of course Rawitzki too expected to be compensated for arranging these generous rebates, receiving commission payments amounting to almost 8,000 Reichsmarks. These figures were offset against the "proceeds of the sale". Osias Fischbach received a grand total of 13,000 Reichsmarks for his store, including inventory and goods – a balance that he was not even able to access. Indeed, he was at the mercy of Rawitzki, from whom he had to ask for cash to cover his daily needs.

Apart from the people mentioned above, local organisations and institutions also helped themselves to Fischbach's property: the City of Villach, the National-Socialist Welfare Service (NSV) and the NSDAP District Leadership carried off the shop's display stands, lamps, mirrors and other fittings. Again Rawitzki made generous donations to the SS, SA, Hitler Youth and the District Leadership, amounting to over 3,500 Reichsmarks¹⁷ – paid for from Osias Fischbach's sequestered property.

Yet apparently Rawitzki had taken things too far, because towards the end of the year the Gestapo called him to account for embezzlement. When he was examined in December 1938, he justified the discounts he had given by arguing that not a single "Aryan businessman" would have bought "Jewish shopkeepers' trashy goods" without appropriate concessions.¹⁸

This argument was also put forward at the restitution proceedings that began in 1953, during the course of which the profiteers who had benefitted from the liquidation of the Fischbach store called it a “junk-goods” shop that allegedly only kept the cheapest stock. According to them, this bric-a-brac was just a pile of shelf-fillers, and in any case taking the stock had been a loss-making deal. The conclusion was, therefore, that Fischbach was not entitled to compensation.¹⁹ However, this was contested by Friedrich Kanzi when he was called to the witness stand; for many years he had been Osias Fischbach’s employee:

“We kept a perfectly balanced range of stock and it’s utterly false to say that only junk-goods were on offer. This is an allegation constantly levelled against the Jews, but it’s not true.”

He gave extra weight to his testimony by pointing out that his boss “every year gave charitable gifts to invalids” so that he “could clear out items that were not selling well”.²⁰ Kanzi, who had shown such remarkable solidarity with Fischbach, had been reported to the Gestapo by Rawitzki, denouncing him as an informer and as “a fellow traveller of the Jews”. It was also Rawitzki who finally arranged for the Fischbach family’s personal property to be destroyed during the November pogrom – one main reason (amongst others) why he was called to account by the Gestapo. On 10th November all the Fischbachs’ furniture and clothing items were thrown out of their apartment window. Rawitzki subsequently had the clothes, linen, beds and carpets, most of which were lying in the street undamaged, transferred for the time being to the National-Socialist Welfare Service (NSV) storeroom. According to later witness statements he wanted to “inflict a bit more damage on the Jew Fischbach”.²¹ For this purpose, on the morning of 11th November, six SA men - among them the commercial clerk Franz Pacher and the Villach shopkeeper Hermann Weissenbacher - went to the National-Socialist Welfare Service storeroom, to destroy “the Jew Fischbach’s stored goods”.²² They were accompanied by Oskar Schwarzhans, who had helped Otto Rawitzki with the liquidation of Osias Fischbach’s business. Equipped with axes and pocket knives they set about their work of destruction in systematic manner. “Bundle after bundle was taken, slashed and torn to shreds”, as Schwarzhand testified when interrogated by the Gestapo. That “by damaging and intentionally destroying goods owned by a third party [he] rendered [him]self liable to prosecution” had “never entered [his] head”.²³ Eventually one of the men took a “bottle of hydrochloric acid and poured some of it over the silverware and what was left over the rolls of fabric. The hydrochloric acid had cost 88 pfennigs (pence)”.²⁴ As a matter of fact, this action was carried out against the instructions of the Secret State Police and the Reich Propaganda Ministry, because in late afternoon on 10th November 1938 Berlin had already sent out the order to refrain from all actions directed against Jews. Finally in May 1939 Otto Rawitzki was sentenced to eighteen months’ imprisonment for embezzlement.

Osias Fischbach was arrested during the course of the November pogrom and together with his son Ferdinand he was deported to Dachau concentration camp. Immediately after his return he was informed by the Gestapo in December 1938 that he had to leave Austria as a matter of urgency. One of the reasons for the Gestapo’s impatience was “the squalid mess the commissioners had made managing and selling his property.”²⁵ This was why the Gestapo even held out the prospect of making it easier for Osias Fischbach to leave the country, provided he proved “co-operative”. In this connection, Osias Fischbach was eventually compelled to sell a plot of land that he owned at a knock-down price to German Reichsbahn (Railways). The land was near the city centre, in Fercher-von-Steinwandstraße

(road) and the conditions of sale were couched in these terms: "If we don't get the plot under these conditions, we'll simply send you to a concentration camp and then you'll certainly be ready to sign."²⁶

On 4th March 1939, the "sale" of the 1,270m² plot to the Villach Reichsbahn Directorate was agreed at a price of 6,350 Reichsmarks lock, stock and barrel. As with all other proceeds from the confiscated Fischbach estate, this money was also transferred to a frozen account. Shortly afterwards Osias and Mina Fischbach left the country. In May 1939 they made their way to Trieste and the means necessary for their onward journey were transferred to them there. Before the outbreak of war they succeeded in fleeing to Venezuela, and from there they entered the United States.

In the meantime in December 1939 German Reichsbahn transferred construction rights on the former Fischbach plot to *Ostmärkische Wohnungsbau- und Siedlungsgesellschaft GmbH* (construction firm). They built the so-called Heads of Department House, comprising four workplace apartments for senior Reichsbahn employees.

The outcome of the restitution proceedings initiated by Osias Fischbach in December 1948 may be taken as a sign of the times. He submitted an application for restitution of the expropriated plot, or at least an equivalent replacement property (the original plot was no longer available, because of the residential building constructed on it).

Gemeinnützige Eisenbahnsiedlungsgesellschaft Villach GmbH (legal successor to *Ostmärkische Wohnungsbau- und Siedlungsgesellschaft GmbH*) was not, however, prepared to accept the claim, because in their legal opinion the plot would have been expropriated, even without the National-Socialist regime. Their legal team invoked the Railway Expropriation Act of 1878, under which an expropriation right had been provided for, with a view to the construction of residential buildings for railway employees. What's more they took the view that Osias Fischbach had sold his property voluntarily, and that he had used the proceeds to finance his family's emigration. In February 1950 the Restitution Commission accepted at first instance the case made by the former "Aryaniser" and completely rejected the claim for the return of the expropriated plot.²⁷

Further proceedings and a great deal of skilful argument from Dr. Egon Weissberger were needed before he was finally able to win an adequate plot in Villach Völkendorf for his client, Osias Fischbach.²⁸

As regards his former retail business, Osias Fischbach had to conduct psychologically stressful negotiations with the former looters and he also had to agree to out-of-court settlements that were extremely disadvantageous to himself.

Josef Mitzner

The son of Jewish parents, Josef Mitzner came into the world in Budapest on 19th October 1865. On his father's premature death, he became an apprentice tinsmith when he was eleven-and-a-half years old, probably in Galicia, and he reached Villach towards the end of the 19th century as part of one of the great waves of migration. In 1899 he opened a tinsmith's shop in Klagenfurterstraße (road) and in the same year he converted to Protestantism.

In 1901 he married Josefina Sima, who had been born in 1879, in Rothenturn near Judenburg, within the greater Villach area. Their children Elsa (1905), Josef (1908), Hans (1911), Gustav (1913) and Helene (1919) were all born in Villach. During the so-called Carinthian border struggles, Mitzner participated in the defensive action on Maria Gail bridge, and was awarded the Carinthian Cross (Unclassified) in recognition of his particular

services. His two sons, Josef and Gustav, were sports enthusiasts and members of the German Gymnastics Association in Villach. In 1929 Josef Mitzner junior was excluded because of his Jewish origin, as was his brother Gustav, a gifted swimmer.

In March 1938 Josef junior, being a “non-Aryan”, was also finally excluded from the Villach voluntary fire brigade, of which he had been a member since 1929. From now on, Mitzner family life went through a phase that was principally marked out by hostility, threats, denunciations and experiences of actual violence. For fear of being arrested by the Gestapo, Elsa Menapace, the married eldest child of the Mitzner family, committed suicide at her parents’ home on 22nd September 1939.

Josef Mitzner senior’s application to transfer his trader’s licence to his son, Josef Mitzner junior was rejected by the Villach Guilds Board in December 1938, after a six months’ “processing period”, since in their opinion it was all an attempt to camouflage a Jewish business. When subsequently presented to the NSDAP Villach District Leadership and the Carinthian Governor’s Office the son’s desperate pleas for the licence that would allow him to practise his trade as a tinsmith fell on deaf ears.²⁹

Neither was the family spared the effects of the 1938 November pogrom. When criminal proceedings against the alleged offenders were initiated in 1946, Josefine Mitzner placed the following on record:

“Around noon on 10th November 1938, about 8 to 10 men forced their way into my Villach flat at Klagenfurterstrasse 46, pretending that they had been sent to search for weapons. Yet immediately on entering my flat, or rather the living room, the intruders began to destroy the furnishings so that I suffered damage to the value of 4.000 Schillings, and in my current economic situation I can’t make good the damage done out of my own pocket. (...) Which of these men was the most aggressive, I can’t now say, because at the time of the deed I was horribly agitated, and I couldn’t take in the details. I was even more outraged by the behaviour and actions of these men, because people knew that I was a respectable woman, who kept herself to herself and who had never done anybody any harm. The men stayed in the flat for about 10 to 15 minutes and then left again. The purpose for which they said they had turned up, namely to search for weapons, was not noticeable in the way these men went on the rampage. As regards witnesses to the incident, only my daughter can count really, because in the meantime my husband has died, my elder son had been arrested about 10 minutes prior to the men turning up, and my younger son was serving in the Wehrmacht.”³⁰

Not least because of daughter Helene Mitzner’s evidence, the court was finally able to identify a total of eight people who participated in the Villach pogrom, and investigations against them commenced.³¹ The demolition squad consisted exclusively of “illegals” – veteran SA fighters – as well as young Party aspirants, who according to police reports were acting out their “racial hatred” against defenceless people. Helene Mitzner’s description of the train of events offers an impression of how the SA squad’s action was played out:

“Some of the men went into the bedroom, some into the living room, and one or two were in the hall. I remember clearly that the accused Adelbrecht was in the hall and did not take part in the riot. I remember Adelbrecht so well because I knew him personally from before, and I remember him trying to prevent me using the telephone. (...) As I said before, I knew the accused Adelbrecht personally, and I knew Leutold, Sulzenbacher and Petritsch by sight. I

don't know who the leader of the group was. When standing in the hall, I heard the shattering of glassware thrown to the floor. I made my way into the bedroom for a short moment, and saw the accused Abrutsch smashing the flower vases with a flower stand. What's more I saw with my own eyes, how the accused Sulzenbacher tossed the crystal bowl my friend had given me as a confirmation present into the corner of the room. (...) I will add to the file a list of those items that were completely ruined and of those that could later be mended. Among the completely ruined items were above all glassware, various dinner services, and among the damaged items was bed linen, the carpet, mattresses and clothes cupboards. One of the men wearing heavy hiking boots was jumping up and down on the bed linen. (...) The beds were not only just taken apart but heavily damaged too. The divan legs were missing and the silver clock was completely broken. I had to take away two baskets-full of pieces of broken glass. The carpet was cut up, but it was mended again later."³²

With one exception, on 6th March 1947 all the accused were sentenced by the court to several months' imprisonment for their riotous behaviour during the November pogrom.³³ Six months after the pogrom the National-Socialists completed the process of lining their own pockets at the expense of the Mitzner family's property. By a purchase agreement dated 5th April 1939 the Mitzner family's centrally located 1,129m² plot went to the Municipality of Villach, for a paltry 6,000 Reichsmarks. Mitzner used the proceeds of the sale to pay part of his contribution to the Jewish Property Tax – the special payment, amounting to one billion Reichsmarks, to which the Jewish population was subjected after the November 1938 pogrom.³⁴

Regarding the purchase of Mitzner's plot, it needs to be pointed out that the City of Villach successfully thwarted an original plan to sell it to one of the shop's employees Johann Irmann. The assumption was that this sale would have been for appearances only and that Irmann had undertaken by verbal agreement to return the plot to Josef Mitzler as soon as political circumstances changed. Having been "Aryanised" in 1939, the plot was in any case used by the Municipality of Villach towards the end of the war to set up a public weigh-bridge. Finally in 1948 the City committed itself to returning the plot to Josef Mitzner's heirs. The heirs agreed to repay the purchase price of 6,000 Reichsmarks to the Municipality, provided they received a Jewish Property tax rebate to the order of 8,000 Reichsmarks. A rent for the weigh-bridge facility was fixed, to be paid by the City.³⁵

Leon Zwerling

Leon Zwerling, born in Galicia in 1871, was stationed in Villach towards the end of the 19th century, as an Imperial and Royal Officer Accountant at the Seebach military barracks. In Vienna in 1902 he married Anna Taurer from Lienz, who was also a Seebach resident.³⁶ After completing military service he found employment with the Railway. In 1911 he acquired a building plot on the northern outskirts of Villach, where he built a respectable apartment house. Back then its postal address was Großvassach 94, today it is Oberer Heidenweg 34. Zwerling was a member of the Social-Democratic Labour Party (SDAP) as well as a Board Member of *Kinderfreunde*, a children's organisation. Within the Party he did nothing to make himself conspicuous – well knowing that as a Jew he represented a welcome target for his political opponents. This had already been demonstrated by earlier anti-Semitic attacks in Landskron, where Franz Jagritsch a Railway official had written a letter to the newspaper, launching savage, public attacks on his "Jewish landlord" and "Marxist housing welfare official", Leon Zwerling:

“It is high time that any man in the Landskron area who does not pay homage to Marxist terror should finally stand up on his own feet again. After all it’s a German community and not all community residents are of Jewish origin, nor so degenerate that they just accept all this.”³⁷

Zwerling informed his anti-Semitic tenant via the same newspaper that “I am definitely not prepared to pay him for granting my Jewish house the honour of his presence.”³⁸ Zwerling’s home was trashed by an SA troop during the 1938 November pogrom and the next day Julianne Welz appeared at the house and told the traumatised Zwerling couple that she would be interested in buying it. Her son Haimo Welz had himself been a participant in the “action” of 10th November 1938. Together with like-minded people, he had destroyed the Prassnik family’s weekend house on Lake Magdalensee.

By a decree of the Villach tax office dated 23rd January 1939, the Jewish Property Tax (JUVA) demand for Leon Zwerling was stipulated and recorded in the land registry as a total of 3,000 Reichsmarks. By an adjudication dated 15th February 1939, the Villach Local Court, charged with securing payment of the Jewish Property Tax ruled that the now retired Railway official’s income was to be impounded and only seventy Reichsmarks per month were to be paid out to him.

Zwerling’s earlier attempts to cover his Jewish Property Tax dues with a loan from *Villacher Sparkasse* bank had been unsuccessful. Indeed they back-fired on him completely: now the bank called for accelerated repayment of an old, but still current loan. In view of his predicament, the tax office suggested that he should sell his real estate assets as soon as possible – preferably to a formerly “illegal” Member of the NSDAP.³⁹ On 8th February 1939 Leon Zwerling “sold” his property for 16,000 Reichsmarks, to Franz Welz, a retired Telegraph Office director and a National-Socialist cell-leader.⁴⁰ Zwerling accepted the purchase price, which was about a third less than the already very low assessed value. The money was transferred to a frozen account. Zwerling’s acceptance was based on an assured right of residence for a monthly rent of fifty Reichsmarks.⁴¹

On 15th November 1942 the Gestapo prompted Leon Zwerling und his wife to leave Villach and move to Vienna, where the couple’s tracks more or less disappear. Leon Zwerling survived the Holocaust in Vienna’s Second District – in all probability because of his wife’s “Aryan” status.

In October 1945 Leon and Anna Zwerling returned to Villach and, at the instigation of the Landskron municipality reclaimed their house. It was officially returned to them by a court order of restitution dated 11th June 1948.

In this case the Restitution Commission came to the conclusion that Franz Welz had not kept within the “rules governing business transactions”, but had taken advantage of Leon Zwerling’s predicament and his fear of being deported. Welz had acquired the real estate for a purchase price that was far below market value.⁴²

¹ Lisa Rettl/Alexandra Schmidt, “Du kannst dir kaum meine Verzweiflung vorstellen ...“ Maria Gornik (1900–1942), in: Alexandra Schmidt (editor), *Drautöchter. Villacher Frauengeschichte(n)*, Klagenfurt 2013, pp.194-205, here: p. 195.

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- ² Otto Friessner interviewed by Hans Haider, Villach, October 1998, in: Hans Haider, *Kärntner Jüdinnen und Juden. Gedemütigt – Verfolgt – Vertrieben*, Villach 2007, p. 30.
- ³ Heimo Halbrainer/Gerald Lamprecht/Ursula Mindler, *Unsichtbar. NS-Herrschaft: Verfolgung und Widerstand in der Steiermark*, Graz 2008, pp. 147 ff.
- ⁴ Arabella Weissberger, to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 23rd May 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 148/49, Sch. 43.
- ⁵ Cited in Alexander Verdnik, "Arisierung" in Kärnten. Die Enteignung des jüdischen Besitzes 1938–1945, Phil.doctoral thesis, Graz 2013, p. 88; also see Heimo Halbrainer/Gerald Lamprecht/Ursula Mindler, *Unsichtbar*, p. 135.
- ⁶ Cited in Ulrike Felber/Peter Melichar/Markus Priller et al, *Ökonomie der Arisierung. Grundzüge, Akteure und Institutionen (= Veröffentlichungen der Österreichischen Historikerkommission. Vermögensentzug während der NS-Zeit sowie Rückstellungen und Entschädigungen seit 1945 in Österreich*, published by Clemens Jabloner/Brigitte Bailer-Galanda/Eva Blimlinger et al, vol 10/1), Vienna–Munich 2004, p. 68.
- ⁷ Hans Safrian/Hans Witek, *Und keiner war dabei. Dokumente des alltäglichen Antisemitismus in Wien 1938*, Vienna 2008, p. 127.
- ⁸ August Walzl, "Bis Jahresende ist Kärnten judenfrei". Antisemitische Agitation und Judenverfolgung vor und nach dem März 1938, in: Helmut Rumpler (editor), *März 1938 in Kärnten. Fallstudien und Dokumente zum Weg in den „Anschluß“*, Klagenfurt 1989, pp. 152-170, here: p. 167.
- ⁹ Ulrike Felber/Peter Melichar/Markus Priller et al, *Ökonomie der Arisierung*, pp.121 f.
- ¹⁰ Irene Etzersdorfer, *Arisiert. Eine Spurensicherung im gesellschaftlichen Untergrund der Republik*, Wien 1995, p. 24; also Ulrike Felber/Peter Melicha/Markus Priller et al., *Ökonomie der Arisierung*, pp. 40 ff.
- ¹¹ Dirk van Laak, "Arisierung" und Judenpolitik im "Dritten Reich". Zur wirtschaftlichen Ausschaltung der jüdischen Bevölkerung in der rheinischwestfälischen Industrieregion, Essen 2003, p. 57.
- ¹² Cited in Ulrike Felber/Peter Melichar/Markus Priller et al, *Ökonomie der Arisierung*, p. 87.
- ¹³ The diaries of Joseph Goebbels. *Sämtliche Fragmente*, vol 3, Munich 1987, p. 553 (Entry from 13th Nov 1938).
- ¹⁴ Ulrike Felber/Peter Melichar/Markus Priller et al, *Ökonomie der Arisierung*, p. 90.
- ¹⁵ Cited in Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin 2007, p. 83.
- ¹⁶ Ing. Oskar Schwarzahans, Interrogation Protocol, Secret State Police, Border-Police Commissariat Villach, 2nd Dec 1938. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 2004/38, Sch. 68.
- ¹⁷ Otto Eduard Rawitzki, Interrogation Protocol, Secret State Police, Border-Police Commissariat, Villach, 6th Dec 1938. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 2004/38, Sch. 68.
- ¹⁸ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁹ Osias Fischbach, Restitution Matters of Emmerich Schuscha, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 8th Oct 1953. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 14/53, Sch. 65; also Osias Fischbach, Restitution Matters of Stefan Sleik, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 8th Oct 1953. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 13/53, Sch. 65.
- ²⁰ Friedrich Kanzi, witness statement, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 8th March 1954. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 14/53, Sch. 65.
- ²¹ Otto Eduard Rawitzki, Interrogation Protocol, Secret State Police, Border-Police Commissariat; Villach, 6th Dec 1938. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 2004/38, Sch. 68.
- ²² Hermann Weissenbacher, Interrogation Protocol, Secret State Police, Border-Police Commissariat; Villach, 6th Dec 1938. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 2004/38, Sch. 68.
- ²³ Ing. Oskar Schwarzahans, Interrogation Protocol, Secret State Police, Border-Police Commissariat; Villach, 2nd Dec 1938. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 2004/38, Sch. 68.
- ²⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁵ Dr. Egon Weissberger, witness statement in Restitution Matters regarding the German Reichsbahn, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach District Court, 7th April 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 495/48, Sch. 35.

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- ²⁶ Letter from Ferdinand Fischbach, to Solicitor Dr. Egon Weissberger, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, New York, 22nd Dec 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 95/48, Sch. 35.
- ²⁷ Statement by the Restitution Commission, at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 6th Feb 1950. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 215/49, Sch. 46.
- ²⁸ Copy of the settlement, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 22.2.1951. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 495/48, Sch. 35.
- ²⁹ Josef Mitzner junior, to the NSDAP District Leader; Villach, 27th Jan 1939, and Josef Mitzner junior, to the Reich Governor, Villach, 28th Jan 1939. The documents are privately owned by Christiane Wernig, Villach.
- ³⁰ Josefine Mitzner, witness statement, Villach, 24th Sept 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 3065/46, Sch. 263.
- ³¹ Eight pogrom participants had to justify themselves before the court. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 3065/46, Sch. 263.
- ³² Helene Mitzner, witness statement, Villach, 28th Sept 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 3065/46, Sch. 263.
- ³³ Sentencing, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, 6th March 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 3065/46, Sch. 263.
- ³⁴ Villach City Council to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court in Klagenfurt, Villach, 30th April 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 18/47, Sch. 2.
- ³⁵ Settlement between the Municipality of Villach and the Mitzner heirs, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 5th Aug 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 18/47, Sch. 2.
- ³⁶ Wedding register of the Jewish Community in Graz.
- ³⁷ *Villacher Zeitung*, 3rd Sept 1924, p. 4.
- ³⁸ *Ibidem*, 17th Sept 1924, p. 6.
- ³⁹ Leon Zwerling, Restitution request, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 30th July 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 100/47, Sch. 7.
- ⁴⁰ Landskron Municipality Voter Certification sheet, 6th Aug 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 2113/46, Sch. 214.
- ⁴¹ Decision of the Restitution Commission at Graz Higher Regional Court, Graz, 11th June 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 100/47, Sch. 7.
- ⁴² *Ibidem*.

Our rights – your rights

Unser Recht (Our Rights) – this memorable title was not selected at random when the “Protection League for those Affected by Restitution Claims” named its official newsletter. Despite the laws of the Second Republic, former “Aryanisers” insisted on their alleged entitlement to keep looted Jewish property, even after the Hitler dictatorship had come to an end. To understand fully why some former “Aryanisers” fought so fiercely against the constitutionally enacted Restitution Laws, some aspects of their legal position need closer examination.

The demands of “those affected by restitution claims” – in most cases former National Socialist Party adherents – appealed in their line of argument particularly to the (pseudo-) legal framework established by the National-Socialists. That is, after the end of the War, they fought against a new, and from their perspective illegitimate, legal system that threatened the material advantages they had acquired under National-Socialism.

Throughout they stuck passionately to the view that they had acquired “Aryanised” property lawfully. “We not only feel that we are in the right, but we *are* in the right, and what is right has to stay right!”¹, declaimed the newsletter in its March 1949 issue.

The “Protection League for those Affected by Restitution Claims” (hereinafter abbreviated to the Protection League) was founded at the end of 1948 by former “Aryanisers”. In response to the Third Restitution Act, they were vehemently outspoken in their call for an amendment to the law². Supported by the Association of Independents (VdU), the Protection League particularly demanded the creation of a compensation fund to cover losses suffered by former profiteers, as a result of restitution. The League’s leading figure and president was Hans Oberhammer, who was also the author of innumerable articles and other texts. The monthly periodical *Unser Recht* served the Protection League as its official organ and mouthpiece. It was very much the Austrian version of its German counterpart, which was entitled *Die Restitution*.

Besides a staff of lawyers³ many of “those affected by restitution claims” also had their say in the newsletter’s pages. Furthermore, the editors collected and publicised all texts appearing in Austria that clearly spoke out against the Federal restitution policy (which was in any case at best half-hearted):

“30,000 court cases have been heard in Austria, in which Jews have forced through restitutions to a value of 100,000 Schillings - and that makes a total of three billion Schillings - even though those people who are today called Aryanisers, had paid the actual purchase prices for the disputed items. On top of that, ten thousand out-of-court settlements have been reached, involving assets of about a billion Schillings.”⁴

Essentially the newsletter offered former “Aryanisers” and National-Socialists an Austria-wide platform for political agitation; all the more important, as from 1950 the calls for a referendum on the Third Restitution Act grew louder. Invoking the protection of “freedom of the press”, antagonistic political parties were denigrated and at the same time the whole gamut of anti-Semitism was rehearsed. In the first issue, the League’s president gave a clear lead on role-reversal between culprit and victim:

“[I]f, in the due legal form of a sales contract, someone has clearly expressed his intention of committing himself to an action (voluntary transfer of property) (...) and of complying with official regulations known to him (such as contract approval by the Property Transactions Office), how is it possible to speak of this as ‘involuntary’ in the light of legal regulations? Indeed, hard facts and legal truths have first to be stood on their head, if we are to place the voluntary seller on a same level with a person forcibly deprived of his property, which is the only place where the ‘involuntary’ element comes in.

Neither can a claim of unlawful intent be mounted on the fact that the purchase price was not to be paid directly to the seller, but rather to the officially established payment office. For, this was as agreed and it conformed to the terms of the contract. Incidentally, experience has shown (...) that the sums paid – in line with the intentions of the voluntary sellers and by agreement with them – were used by them to meet their liabilities and to their advantage (tax payments, and so on).”⁵

Under the slogan “Our only power is the law. Yet the power of law is invincible”, from 1948 those obliged to make restitution started a real crusade against the Restitution Acts and the people who wanted their “Aryanised” property returned. If we follow the logic of “those affected by restitution claims”, there had indeed been sporadic illegal “changes of ownership” in Austria between 1938 and 1945, however, in the majority of cases the contracts had been concluded in a fair way and neither of the contractual partners had been cheated.

There was a multiplicity of strategies for avoiding liability. In all cases, the opponents of restitution ultimately speak of “*bona fide* acquisitions”. The discursive strategies also include the argument that buying Jewish vendors’ property had simply done them a favour - and indeed a favour that had saved their lives. Again, the former profiteers styled themselves as “victims”, pointing out that they too had lived through times of need during the war. In the hope of winning approval, the rhetorical question was put in March 1949: “Hiding away in cellars, as the machinery of war rolled over the top of us, did we not make unutterable sacrifices of our goods and lives?”⁶. Yet above all they regarded themselves as victims of the Restitution Laws that had allegedly been “demanded by selfish people in a spirit of retaliation and without being thought through”, “endorsed by people who didn’t know what they were doing”, “thoroughly biased ” and, finally, “inflicted on the innocent”.⁷

At the judicial level, one of the tried and tested strategies was to use all possible resources of the law to prolong the restitution proceedings. For example, solicitors and their clients repeatedly raised objections or brought in fresh witnesses, who in most cases could contribute nothing new. Hearing such witnesses was simply a means of running down the calendar until the hoped-for rethinking of the law came through – that is to say a possible new interpretation of the cases that favoured the “Aryanisers”. In the League’s weekly meetings, members were consulted on their respective legal options. In the Nationalrat (National Council) the Protection League got its front-line political support from the VdU, a forerunner of today’s FPÖ. For instance Dr. Helfried Pfeifer, a lawyer and VdU representative, submitted a motion to the National Council in May 1950, under which, all ongoing proceedings started after the Third Restitution Act had come into force should be suspended; no further judgments should be passed and judgments that had already been delivered should simply not be enforced.⁸

There were public demonstrations right from the start, intended to pressurise the government into either repealing or amending the Third Restitution Act. So, on 26th October

1948 the Protection League called for a huge demonstration in Vienna. Yet a month prior to this, on 26th September, about a hundred and fifty anti-Fascists had broken up a meeting of former “Aryanisers” – an event that was naturally discredited by *Unser Recht* as a terror attack by perpetrators of arbitrary violence.⁹

Active resistance to the Protection League had in fact only emerged within the Concentration Camp Associations. Amongst Jewish people resistance was manifested in a rather muted manner. They continued to be too haunted by the trauma of the Shoah (Holocaust) and the day-to-day fear of attacks. So, the aggrieved Jews’ solicitors carried on a lonely and almost hopeless struggle at the Restitution Commission, in the interest of their clients.

A good example of the Protection League’s political interference is the case of the *Hotel Excelsior* in Velden, which had been Aryanised in 1938. Since 1946 the hotel had at least been run by its former legal owner, Louise Hecht-Neustadtl.¹⁰ After she returned from exile in London, the British military authorities installed her as the hotel’s official administrator. Then she submitted a restitution request to recover her property *de jure*. However, Erhard Brunner, who had formerly “Aryanised” the hotel, had been sentenced by a People’s Court to forfeiture of his property to the Republic of Austria, because of his membership of the NSDAP (illegally) and of the SA. Consequently the Hecht-Neustadtl family’s restitution claim was against the Republic of Austria. And, as in so many other cases, the proceedings dragged on. Most of the witnesses simply no longer could or would recall events that had taken place in 1938.¹¹

In 1948 – Louise Hecht-Neustadtl and her descendants were still waiting for the restitution of their property and the outcome of the proceedings – the Protection League interfered by running this headline in the December edition of *Unser Recht*:

“Rehabilitated by the 3rd Restitution Act”.¹²

In the article that followed – all names were anonymised – Hecht-Neustadtl’s son was accused of having rehabilitated the business so extraordinarily well, with the help of the Third Restitution Act, that he could now sell it at a very nice profit. Louise Hecht-Neustadtl again was only mentioned as the “aggrieved owner” in quotation marks, whilst the “Aryaniser” was introduced to the reader as the actual victim. When in 1949 the family’s lawyer penned a riposte, demanding public retraction of claims about the expropriation process, the newsletter responded to the request because it was forced to do so by law. However it included a commentary which left no room for doubt about its editorial opinion on this issue:

“So all of our readers can reach their own verdict as to what a response elicited by invoking the press-law is worth. Any further comment is superfluous.”¹³

OLD AND NEW PREJUDICES

Overall, the periodical’s characteristic linguistic style was still extremely close to that of the National-Socialists. For example “those affected by restitution claims” regarded themselves as “on rock-hard legal ground”, and they were “determined to hold out until the final victory of justice”; another top priority was the Third Restitution Act - to “disinfect provisions that are contrary to nature, law and morality,” and to “eradicate its methodology of violence and arbitrariness”.¹⁴ The openly anti-Semitic character of its textual content should also be highlighted:

“Anonymous foreigner. You should take better care about what is going on in your own country, and don’t stick your nose into other people’s business. Though you deny your origin your ‘daitsch’ [ie ‘Deutsch’, ‘German language’ as pronounced with a Jewish accent; translator’s note] betrays your magic cap of invisibility.”¹⁵

In none of the thirty-six issues of *Unser Recht* are the Austrian Jews who had escaped abroad referred to as “refugees”. In fact the journal is suspicious of “foreign Jews” who instigate restitution proceedings, attributing to them intentions that are only too clear, such as “making completely implausible things seem true”.¹⁶ Also characterised by a style that was in equal measure pugnacious and anti-Semitic, the weekly VdU newspaper *Neue Front* was established in 1949. In July of the same year it handed over an article for the Protection League to reprint, discussing “The new injustice of restitution cases”.

“Everyone who frequently used the Swissair passenger service from Vienna to Zurich between the Anschluss and the outbreak of war knows that the route was almost exclusively used by Jews, who had found an Aryan to take over their property at a fair price. After paying the 25 percent Reich Emigration Tax, they left the country with their remaining Reichsmarks exchanged for good foreign currency.”¹⁷

In the same article the author complains about refugees returning from Shanghai, allegedly with the sole intent of reselling houses recovered through restitution as soon as possible, before disappearing “over the hills and far away with the proceeds”. With reference to restitution proceedings, the newspaper *Die Neue Front* spoke of a “virtually unbearable favouritism towards individual, propertied Jews”, because of which, the newspaper crowed, “an anti-Semitic atmosphere is forming of its own accord”.¹⁸ As a matter of fact the two media organs and their host organisations were hugely influential in ensuring that anti-Semitism hardly decreased even after 1945. Ongoing, targeted defamation as well as recourse to old anti-Semitic stereotypes meant that in Austria at least a latent anti-Semitic atmosphere grew strongly until 1951.

The Protection League above all accused the Vienna Israelite Religious Community of using devious means to try and promote solidarity with those politicians responsible for the Restitution Acts, particularly through close contacts with the key figures. It was also alleged that the Community had procured unfair advantages for itself. The League was more reticent about Jewish criticisms from abroad. The main reason for this was the presence of the Allies, the fear of sanctions and of any negative impact on the ongoing State Treaty negotiations. Nevertheless an eventual response to criticism from abroad was inevitable. For instance, an article published in the *Wiener Kurier* newspaper on 20th December 1949 about “Jewish criticism of a draft of the new reparation law”¹⁹ was exploited to turn public opinion against the spokesman of the American Jewish Committee, Max Isenbergh. He had previously voiced more than justified criticisms about the “Amnesty for the 500,000”, referring to the many “less-culpable” National-Socialists who under a new law were once more entitled to vote at the forthcoming national elections. In 1950 when the Jewish stakeholders finally expressed concern about the significant rise in anti-Semitism, *Unser Recht* declaimed:

“We Austrians are not anti-Semites by nature. They should by all means refrain from putting that label on us, if we are just fighting for the rights of our people”.²⁰

Yet history, as well as the editorial policy, speaks an entirely different language. In fact the concerns of “those affected by restitution claims” reflect a continuation of National-Socialist fantasies of power - and their racist component is mirrored in the newsletter texts. Not only is any respect for the victims of National-Socialist robbery conspicuously absent, but the knowing reversal of the roles of culprit and victim supported a growth in anti-Semitism even after 1945. In the post-war period, the everyday life of Holocaust survivors was characterised by yet more experience of pain.

¹ *Unser Recht*, series 9/10, March 1949, p. 5.

² From mid-1949 the Fifth Restitution Act that had then just been implemented also became a focus of criticism.

³ Apart from a few anonymous authors, these were: Dr. Leo Feitzinger (Vienna), Josef Reitter (Linz), Dr. Fritz Moser (Urfahr), Dr. Gustav Tiroch (Knittelfeld), Dr. Hans Judex (a pseudonym), Dr. Emmerich Stefenelli (Vienna) and Dr. Arnuf Hummer (Vienna).

⁴ *Unser Recht*, series 34, May/June 1951, p. 11 (from: *Wiener Montag*, 4th June 1951).

⁵ *Unser Recht*, series 1, September 1948, pp. 4-5.

⁶ *Unser Recht*, series 9/10, March 1949, p. 12.

⁷ *Unser Recht*, series 1, September 1948, p. 1.

⁸ At this time the administrative lawyer, Helfried Pfeifer had already been dismissed from his university post and had to retire, on account of his own NS past. Among his works are a collection of legal texts documenting the “Anschluss” process from the point of view of administrative law. See Helfried Pfeifer, *Die Ostmark. Eingliederung und Neugestaltung*, Vienna 1941.

⁹ *Unser Recht*, series 2, October 1948, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ For the family history see also the article by Dieter J. Hecht and Louise Hecht in the present book.

¹¹ KLA, RK 2/47 as well as StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files/Preliminary Investigation Files, Banken-Friedländer.

¹² *Unser Recht* journal, series 5/6, December 1948, p. 15.

¹³ *Unser Recht* journal, series 9/10, March 1949, p. 14.

¹⁴ For example, see also the following issues: *Unser Recht*, series 1, September 1948, p. 3; series 14, July 1949, p. 1; series 16, September 1949, p. 5.

¹⁵ *Unser Recht*, series 5/6, December 1948, p. 16.

¹⁶ *Unser Recht*, series 12, May 1949, p. 6. In this case an author, who prefers to remain anonymous, complains under the heading “A Fairytale”, about the Viennese physician Dr. Felix Rosenberger, whose surgery had been “Aryanised” in 1938.

¹⁷ *Unser Recht*, series 15, August 1949, p. 6.

¹⁸ *Unser Recht*, series 37, November/December 1951, p. 5 (from: *Die Neue Front*, 20th Oct 1951).

¹⁹ *Unser Recht*, series 21, January 1950, p. 9.

²⁰ *Unser Recht*, series 22, February 1950, p. 6.

“Only 5 Jews left in Carinthia”¹, the *Kärntner Volkszeitung* newspaper declared with delight on 20th May 1939. As a matter of fact, many more than five persons of Jewish origin were still resident in Carinthia at that time. These were mainly people who lived in so-called “mixed marriages”, with partners “of German blood”, or they were the offspring of those marriages identified as “first-degree mixed-race”, according to the National-Socialist terminology.

‘Mixed marriage’ had always referred to interdenominational marriages, until the National-Socialist era. Yet, now, under the NS regime, the term only carried racial connotations. ‘Marriage’ was defined accordingly as a “permanent lifetime partnership of two hereditarily healthy persons of the opposite sex and of the same race, for the purpose (...) of producing hereditarily healthy children of the same race and for raising them to become hard-working fellow members of the Volk”². “Unrestrained procreation of people with bad hereditary dispositions”³ was to be prevented at all costs, according to this ideology. The introduction of the Nuremberg Laws – in September 1935 in Germany and, in Austria, in May 1938 – constituted the legal basis for maintaining the purity of the German blood community. The so-called “Law for the Protection of German Blood” criminalised marriages and extramarital relationships between “blood Germans” and “members of alien blood communities”. Even prior to the official implementation of the Racial Laws, the Austrian newspaper *Freie Stimmen* announced:

“In cases where it is known or assured that one nuptial partner is fully Aryan and the other fully Jewish, all institutions that conduct marriages are to put any reading of banns and marriage ceremonies on hold until further notice.”⁴

At first this regulation only referred to persons with at least three Jewish grandparents (“fully Jewish”), but was subsequently extended to “half-Jewish people”, whilst marriages between persons who were “a quarter-Jewish” and “blood Germans” were largely tolerated. Joseph Goebbels commented on the new regulations: “quarter-Jewish, come over to us, but half-Jewish, only by exception”⁵. For the time being, any existing mixed marriages remained as they were.

Violations of the Law for the Protection of German Blood were condemned as racial defilement and this was an ever-present preoccupation. No effort was spared to fuel the “rage of fellow Germans against this kind of stain”.⁶ In addition to marriages, the law also covered extra-marital sexual relationships.

The quest for ever more precise details about various aspects of racial defilement is to be understood not just as evidence of the Nazis’ absurd bureaucracy, but also as a screen onto which the widest range of pornographic fantasies could be projected.⁷

As regards extramarital relationships, especially the old anti-Semitic cliché of the Jewish “lecher” was given new life, by being bolstered with pseudo-scientific racial criteria. In consequence, it was predominantly Jewish men who were convicted, whereas in most cases the women remained unpunished, because of preconceptions about women’s sexual immaturity. Article 3 of the “Law for the Protection of German Blood”, which came into force

in Austria on 1st August 1938, needs to be understood against this ideological background. Under this article, Jewish people were prohibited from employing or continuing to employ Aryan domestic servants under forty-five years of age. This regulation was above all meant to protect young female household servants against sexual abuse by their Jewish employers and against any possible consequences. The Carinthian press tried to reassure the women who lost their jobs because of this law:

“Because of the introduction of the Nuremberg Racial Laws many women will have to quit their jobs as domestic servants in Jewish households. The Departments of the Reich Institute for the Placement of Employees and of Unemployment Welfare have been instructed to make every effort to find placements elsewhere for these people.”⁸

As regards interdenominational marriages pre-dating 1938, from the legal point of view there was no explicit ruling on how they should be handled, even in the Nazi state – neither for Jewish, nor for non-Jewish spouses. In this respect “Jewish relationships” were countered by disapproval at other levels and they also affected the non-Jewish partner: in the first place by enormous and often intensely focussed hostility from the neighbourhood and the village community, or by all kinds of chicanery and harassment from the authorities. In the Villach area, this can be exemplified by the case of Melitta Stein, who lived in Stöcklweingarten on Lake Ossiachersee together with her husband, the Jewish physician Dr. Gustav Stein. In June 1938 Gustav Stein died, and Melitta Stein became a widow. Yet this changed nothing in terms of the anti-Semitic hostilities either on the part of the neighbourhood or of local officials. Jakob Clementschitsch, who had been a National-Socialist municipal councillor in Sattendorf, testified as follows during restitution proceedings in 1948:

“Her husband treated Sattendorf people free of charge. In addition he performed operations at Villach hospital, without a fee. Still, when he was buried the NSDAP gave strict instructions not to attend the funeral. The fire brigade, that he himself had founded, was not allowed to attend and the instruction went out to sabotage the funeral. Mrs Stein was also humiliated in other ways though, because people avoided her, and I had the feeling she was very offended by this.”⁹

This was confirmed and elaborated upon by the testimony of Josefine Sandriesser, a former neighbour of the Steins:

“Frau Dr. Stein used to be a highly respected lady, but after that everyone just passed her by without taking any notice of her. (...) People said amongst themselves that you shouldn't attend the funeral, because you never knew what might come of it.”¹⁰

For fear of further hostilities and the threat of having her property seized, Melitta Stein transferred her house to her niece. Eventually she moved to Graz preferring to continue her life in the anonymity of the big city.

Arabella Weissberger's experiences were very similar. Her husband, Dr. Egon Weissberger a Villach notary, was a Protestant but because of his Jewish ancestry he was exposed to massive anti-Semitic encroachment on his rights. Immediately after the “Anschluss” he was arrested and forced to give up his office on Villach's main square. In line with National-

Socialist seizure policy the family had to exchange their villa in Velden for an apartment house in Meerbothstraße (street), Villach. They wanted to move in, but were met with resistance from the neighbours. Initiating Restitution proceedings in 1949, Arabella Weissberger placed the following on record:

“My hopes of finding a place to live, peace and quiet and a small income very soon came to nothing. When we brought a few pieces of furniture to put them in a vacant flat in this building, Falkensammer, who also lived there (...) stirred up hatred against us and had us informed that if we wanted to move into the house they wouldn't allow it; they wouldn't live under the same roof as Jews. (...). Then, after our Villach home at Peraustrasse 33 was raided and looted by National-Socialists on 10th November 1938, and everything they couldn't take with them was smashed and thrown into the road, and after my husband was arrested and taken to Dachau concentration camp, I also had to sell the house on Meerbothstrasse.”¹¹

In March 1939 Egon and Arabella Weissberger fled to Yugoslavia together with their daughter, and in 1945 they returned to Villach destitute.

Although there was no explicit legal basis for proceedings against Jewish or non-Jewish spouses living in mixed marriages, they too were affected by the drastic, wider persecution and expropriation measures.

Especially when it came to acquiring property and assets, the National-Socialists did not mind breaking with their own laws; they converted “Aryan” property into “Jewish” property without further ado. Josefine and Emil Richter, who had successfully run a guesthouse in Sattendorf at Lake Ossiachersee since 1929 experienced this for themselves. The legal owner and manager of *Strandpension Richter* was Josefine Richter, who was considered “Aryan”. Her husband, Emil Richter-Roland had converted to the Catholic faith as early as 1905, but he was “afflicted with” Jewish ancestry. He was a playwright, author and journalist who divided his time between Vienna and Sattendorf. In line with the target “of making Lake Ossiachersee Jew-free”¹² the National-Socialists had already cast an eye over the business shortly after the “Anschluss”.

Then in May 1938 Emil Richter-Roland was asked to demonstrate his ethnicity, because “to designate a business as Aryan, it is absolutely necessary that both spouses present a certificate of Aryan descent.”¹³

Richter-Roland's objection that this demand did not comply with the legislation then in force and that the business was solely his “Aryan” wife's property, elicited this response from NSDAP Sattendorf:

“Even if you had nothing to do with this business, you would still be required to present a certificate of Aryan descent in your capacity as the licensee's spouse. As long as this is not the case, your business will be designated as Jewish”.¹⁴

The self-confident manner in which Emil Richter-Roland defended his wife's property was apparently too much for the local officials. On 23rd May 1938 a letter from the Villach District Leadership of the National-Socialist Business Cell Organisation (NSBO) was sent to Carinthian Gau (region) Administration, with a request to have the Richter case “dealt with as soon as possible by Kren, your Jew commissioner (...), because Richter is making all kinds of propaganda for his guesthouse in Sattendorf (...). Richter, whose whole appearance

is that of a full Jew, claims that he is not obliged to present a certificate of Aryan descent".¹⁵ Two months later, on 3rd July 1938, Richter's solicitor Dr. Arnold Peter, who had been consulted in the meantime, referred to the then valid legislation in his correspondence with the District Leadership:

"§ 5 (The First Decree of the Reich Citizenship Law from 14th Nov 1935) sets out an exhaustive and specific definition of the term Jew. It is inadmissible to designate as Jews and to treat as such, persons other than those persons specified by the definition of the term as stipulated in § 5. (...) According to this a Jew is somebody at least three of whose grandparents were full Jews. Accordingly Mrs Richter is Aryan and did not become Jewish by marrying a Jew. I suppose that in the meantime you have also reached the same conclusion."¹⁶

However in the Richter case economic interests outweighed any legal scruples. Towards the end of 1938, as the November pogroms were in progress all across Austria, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to arrest the obdurate Emil Richter-Roland and deport him to Dachau. One upshot was that Josefine Richter's business licence was withdrawn. In 1947, Josefine Richter described this remarkable situation to the Restitution Commission:

"Kutschera, the Deputy Gauleiter of Carinthia, turned up at my place and explained to me that he was going to expropriate my business. When I pointed out that he had no legal justification for doing so, he explained that it would happen nevertheless (...). Since we had to move to Vienna and since I was well aware that I wouldn't be able to keep the property - well because my husband was Jewish, and I couldn't just split up with my loyal companion. There was nothing else for it, but to sell my property under the pressure of the circumstances."¹⁷

Then at the end of 1938 a diminished existence of fear and anxiety began for spouses in mixed marriages. It was characterised by all sorts of harassment, ignominy and discriminatory rules. In December that year Hitler himself introduced separate categories of mixed marriages, the "privileged" and "non-privileged". However these categories never attained legally binding validity.

PRIVILEGED AND NON-PRIVILEGED MIXED MARRIAGES

A mixed marriage was "privileged" if the wife was Jewish and the couple either had no children, or children who were raised as gentiles (baptised). "Non-privileged" marriages were those cases, where the husband was Jewish and there were no children, or where one spouse was Jewish and the children were raised in the Jewish way.

Apparently mixed marriages where the wife was Jewish were more easily tolerated by the National Socialists. This highlights the fact that, in line with National-Socialist ideology, as compared with the husband, the wife had a substantially lower status within the family. Whilst non-privileged families were usually treated as "full Jews", couples in privileged mixed marriages as well as children raised as "first-degree mixed-race" enjoyed certain exemptions from standard rules. They were not obliged to move into buildings specifically designated for Jews, as was the case in Vienna for example. And neither were they required to wear the yellow Star of David in public, which otherwise became compulsory from September 1941.

Right up until the end of their regime, the National-Socialists' handling of mixed marriages and persons of "mixed race" was characterised by the fact that the NS judiciary had come to no definitive legal decisions. Whilst the Party representatives, the SS and the Gestapo repeatedly demanded radical measures for the complete elimination of mixed marriages, the Ministry of the Interior insisted on regulations that were manageable and easy to implement. Historian Saul Friedländer has interpreted the political tactics around mixed marriages as a proof that even the Nazi-regime did not feel completely indifferent towards negative public reactions.¹⁸ As a matter of fact a significant proportion of the "Aryan" population was affected by this issue, and the regime was vitally dependent on their support, especially after the outbreak of war.

The psychological pressures that both spouses in a mixed marriage were exposed to were nevertheless enormous. Especially for the Jewish spouses, the fear that their "Aryan" partners would not be able to bear the arbitrary harassments and continuous hostility and would leave them must have been extremely stressful. This was no groundless anxiety. Right from the beginning the Nazi-regime put intense pressure on the "Aryan" spouses to get a divorce, and so return to being "part of the German Blood Community".

This was also the reason why on 6th July 1938 a decree was issued, making it possible to annul a mixed marriage without great bureaucratic costs. Reactions to it varied sharply. Many of those concerned remained loyal to their marriage vows, despite fear of the consequences. Others, however, took advantage of the legislative "offer", in some cases only as a sham to protect an "Aryan" spouse. Quite a few "Jewish" spouses divorced for appearance's sake, and fled to foreign countries, whilst the "Aryan" ex-spouse stayed in the country to preserve at least some of the property.

Many of the divorced couples remarried after the end of the war. Among them was the Villach retailer Arthur Glesinger; in 1938 he divorced his wife Josefine, who was considered "Aryan". After his return from exile in 1946 the couple married for a second time.

Herta, the Glesingers' eldest daughter, also lived with a non-Jewish husband. Her spouse, Emil Klucka, had worked for the Glesingers since 1929, and had been a "sleeping" business partner since 1937. In 1938 he tried to avert the threat of "Aryanisation", by offering to take over the shop himself. In numerous applications he reiterated his professed (perhaps real) sympathy for the Party:

"The great contradiction of my life, that I don't know how to get away from, is my marriage to my wife. I have a small child from this marriage. Mr Reich Commissioner, I beseech you to verify whether my whole personal behaviour cannot compensate for the fact of my marriage, so that I may be entrusted with the legal take-over of the Glesinger business."¹⁹

Vying with him was the retailer Peter Foiker. He tried everything possible to ensure that the Villach District Leadership transferred the "provisional administration" of the well-known and successful Glesinger business to himself. He warned the authorities: "taking into account the size of the business, there is a real danger of asset-stripping, if it is left in Jewish hands"²⁰. Unsurprisingly, the decision came down in favour of Peter Foiker. The responsible official at the Klagenfurt Property Transactions Office explained: Klucka, "could on no account be considered, because of his kinship", the more so as, in the event of Emil Klucka's take-over, "Jewish money would still be involved, whether as working- or silent-capital, just as it had been before"²¹.

In November 1938 the Glesinger warehouse clearance was completed. The business was liquidated and the premises rented out to Herbert Werner and his business partner Hermann Weissenbacher. Until then the two businessmen had been running the *Werner & Weissenbacher* sportswear shop at Leiningenhof, and they had for some time been looking for business premises in a better location.²² In 1934 Hermann Weissenbacher had been imprisoned for several months for illegal NS activities. His partner Herbert Werner had been interned at the Wöllersdorf detention camp from May to August 1934.²³

After the November pogrom, the Kluckas, together with their daughter Liselotte and Herta's mother Josefine Glesinger, moved to Klagenfurt, where they lived out the war.

In January 1939 marriage guidance centres were opened in Villach and Klagenfurt.

According to the *Kärntner Grenzruf* (newspaper), they were part of the "ready to implement, positive and practical measures of an upright, healthy National-Socialist population policy".²⁴ Soon afterwards law offices, advising on demographic policies, were attached to these marriage guidance centres. They were outreach centres for the Racial Policy Office of the Carinthian Gauleitung (NS district leadership).

"Working to protect the purity of the German people" amongst other things involved officially honouring mothers who were prolific in child-bearing, and racially-oriented educational work, including presentations and films. Furthermore the Racial Policy Office made it its business to compile "inventories of Jews' and gypsies' real estate holdings" and to keep records of "anti-social extended families".²⁵ Although there is no hard evidence, this office in all likelihood also handled records of mixed marriages and categorised persons of "mixed-race".

During the course of discussions about the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" at the Wannsee Conference on 20th January 1942, the issue of mixed marriages was again debated - yet without reaching a firm decision. In the debriefing session on 6th March 1942 there was talk in favour of the principle of sterilising persons of "first-degree mixed-race" and of compulsory dissolution of mixed marriages. But hard-and-fast regulation was postponed for reconsideration after the eventual end of the war.²⁶

Specifically, this meant that there still was no definitive legislation against mixed marriages and persons of "mixed-race". In practice, however, many arbitrary actions were carried out. In particular, as it became increasingly apparent that the German Reich was going to suffer military defeat in the War, the persecution of so-called "mixed-race" persons and Jewish spouses in mixed marriages started to become radicalised and more widespread.²⁷

In essence the Gestapo took advantage of every opportunity to get their hands on these groups of people. So, when an "Aryan" spouse died, this usually meant that protection for the Jewish partner was over - and immediate deportation was the consequence. Reflecting on such cases, the German-Jewish author Viktor Klemperer, who himself lived in an interdenominational marriage, stated in 1944. "This is what I call the National-Socialist cremation of widowers".²⁸

Among Jewish partners in mixed marriages and amongst their children, a sense of insecurity and the constant fear that they would still be deported grew steadily. Even the smallest offence could mean the break-up of the family, and in the worst case, death. This is what happened to the Villach Jew Maria Gornik.

THE WOMEN OF ROSENSTRASSE

In February and March 1943 something happened in Berlin that, in the ten years of NAZI rule until then, no-one could ever have imagined possible: successful, open resistance to the regime.

On 27th February the Gestapo arrested 15,000 Berlin Jews in a lightning raid. Amongst them were many Jewish husbands from mixed marriages and men of so-called "mixed-race". They were taken to assembly camps, from where they were expected to be deported. One of the assembly points to which they were taken was in Rosenstraße (street) in Berlin. Just a short time later many non-Jewish wives and mothers gathered there. Some protested loudly and others in silence, but they all demanded the release of their husbands and sons – even when they were briefly threatened with weapons. More and more protesters gathered in Rosenstraße in a show of solidarity with the women; every day there were estimated to be more than 2,000 people. Finally the protest was successful. One by one the detainees were all officially released and issued with identification and discharge papers. This action is the only known instance to date of a public protest against deportation of Jews during the Nazi era. It demonstrates that it was by no means impossible to oppose Nazi policy successfully. The Jewish solicitor Bruno Blau observed with some acrimony: "If a relatively small number of wives of Jewish men were able to change their husbands' destiny for the better, then all those (...) who now in such large numbers identify themselves as opponents of Nazism could also have prevented all the atrocities that supposedly they had never wanted or even detested, if only they had been serious about it".²⁹

CASE STUDIES

Maria Gornik

Born on 20th April 1900 in Bursztyn (Galicia), Maria Schönfeld had married the Catholic Wilhelm Gornik, of Maribor, and they had lived in Villach since 1920. In terms of National-Socialist categories, the childless couple lived in a "privileged mixed marriage", although this did not save them from anti-Semitic attacks and denunciations. Their home in Weißbriachgasse (road) was wrecked in November 1938, and their landlord subsequently evicted them.³⁰

The Gornik couple had good luck in so far as they found new accommodation in Oberfeldstraße 31, which was near the general store that they ran - no easy undertaking for a married couple of whom one partner was Jewish. But here too they were constantly watched by the neighbours – a circumstance that was to be Maria Gornik's downfall. On 3rd July 1941 the Gorniks were both arrested together with Georg Wimmer, a neighbour they were friendly with, for allegedly listening to a foreign radio station. They were taken to the Gestapo lock-up in Ankershofengasse (street), where they were denounced by various members of the Villach-Warmbad local branch of the NSDAP, amongst them one of the married couple's neighbours. Whilst Wilhelm Gornik and Georg Wimmer were able to refute the accusations relatively quickly and were allowed to go free, Maria Gornik remained under arrest. When giving evidence in 1946, Wilhelm Gornik rightly guessed: "Presumably, they would not release my wife again on racial grounds".³¹

Wilhelm Gornik's desperate efforts to secure his wife's release, which even took him as far as Berlin, as well as his consistent refusal to get a divorce, were a thorn in the flesh for the authorities. The Gorniks' jointly-owned general store at Kiesweg 10 in Villach-Auen, "was forcibly closed on 15th Oct 1941 under the auspices of the then District Leader, Peter

Piron”,³² as Wilhelm Gornik reported in his 1946 testimony. Meanwhile his wife Maria had been transferred to the Gestapo prison in Klagenfurt, where she encountered Gestapo official Adolf Triebnig, then a Villach resident. When he subsequently gave evidence he said:

“I knew her and her husband, who was a highly decorated First World War veteran. I didn’t want to transfer her to a concentration camp, because she only had a big mouth, otherwise she wasn’t too bad. They said she saved her husband’s life in the East during the First World War. I had a word with my boss (...) and pleaded with him not to allow her transfer to a concentration camp.”³³

It remains unclear whether this statement was merely an attempt to show his involvement in the Gornik case in the best possible light - after all there was a lawsuit about this case after 1945 - or perhaps to absolve him from any involvement at all.³⁴ Yet, according to Triebnig’s statement, his alleged attempt to rescue Maria Gornik was thwarted by an incident that turned the tide against her:

“Weimann agreed and Mrs Gornik got away with a prison sentence. Then at one point Brunner, the prison warder, reported that in her cell the other inmates couldn’t get on with that woman; they refused to be put in with her and they accused her of gossiping and so on. I explained to Mrs Gornik that she had to behave and that I had helped her. In the course of this she became very nervous and then she said: ‘For God’s sake, I didn’t do anything.’ She seemed to be getting hysterical.

She said: the prison warder is upsetting me; I didn’t do anything. I continued the conversation in the prison warder’s cell. I asked her to explain all this to me and finally, when I urged her, she confessed that the prison warder wanted to abuse her during the night. (...) She wasn’t accusing Brunner, the prison warder who was present, but his deputy, who was about the same age. (...) I had Mrs Gornik taken back to her own cell and talked about this with the deputy warder. He was completely speechless and said that officials could on no account accept such impertinence. I had to agree with him and told him to report the matter. Some time later, my boss came up to me, tossed the file on my desk and said: there you have your Gornik. She’s going to the concentration camp. This time I couldn’t help her anymore.”³⁵

According to Triebnig’s statement Maria Gornik accused an official of having abused or sexually assaulted her, which at the same time represented a case of “racial defilement”. The Gestapo man’s statement leads into an area of contemporary-historical research and one that is inherently difficult to access: sexual violence in prisons and concentration camps. After the war, the women affected – those who survived - hardly had a chance to talk about their experiences of sexual violence. However research around such issues highlights that the list of psychological and physical varieties of sexual violence is a long one, ranging from humiliating stares and salacious verbal abuse, right through to rape.³⁶

Whether in Maria Gornik’s case there had actually been a sexual assault or some other offence of this kind we can never know. In her last letter to her husband, shortly before being deported to Ravensbrück she denied that she had ever said anything of that kind. A denial could easily have been out of the shame that she felt before her husband, or because she realised that she had done herself harm by what she had said, and now wanted to avert the consequences of it.³⁷ A copy of the letter, which had apparently been smuggled out of

prison, was subsequently presented to the court by Wilhelm Gornik. It was the last ever sign of life that he received from his wife Maria:

“Dear Jauze!

Today, Friday, they have just told me that tomorrow I will be taken in the early hours to the concentration camp. You can't imagine just how desperate I am, after they made all those promises to us. In the end there was a huge furore. When I spoke to the Head Prison Warder with Mr Tribnig present, I told him that Prison Warder G wouldn't leave me alone. Apparently he interpreted this wrongly, as if I was saying he had assaulted me. That's what a girl working for Mr Tribnig told me.

Today I was taken to the office, where Mr Tribnig wanted to say something to me. I immediately called his attention to the misunderstanding and for this he hurled abuse at me in front of the Head Prison Warder. He remarked that I would be made to pay for it.

Dear Willi, I am only telling you this so that you can lodge a complaint with the Commissioner: that they abused me, although it wasn't my fault. Best wishes and kisses from your loving Mitzi. I wish you a merry Christmas, and don't despair, we'll see each other again in the best of health.”³⁸

Shortly before Christmas 1941 Maria Gornik was - apparently via detours - taken to Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp, north of Berlin, where she only arrived on 21st February 1942. Eight months later she was deported to Auschwitz where she was put to death on 16th October 1942.³⁹

Elsa Deman

At the beginning of the 1920s Johanna Planer left her parents' farm in Steindorf on Lake Ossiachersee, to find work in Vienna. In Carinthia the economic situation was tough and the capital city at least promised more interesting opportunities for Johanna who was then almost twenty years old, and who had nine brothers and sisters. In Vienna she got to know the Viennese-born Robert Deman, a businessman eighteen years her senior. His family were immigrants from Hungary and were of the Jewish faith. In 1927 the couple married and in 1931 their daughter Elsa was born in Vienna. Prior to their marriage both of them had abandoned their respective religious communities. Elsa Deman later commented on this: “After the war my mum started to go to mass again. I don't know about my father, though. But with Hitler it didn't much matter whether one was a believer or not, did it?”⁴⁰

Eleven years after the wedding the Deman couple's partnership was, according to the then current racist doctrine, a “mixed marriage” and their daughter Elsa was classed as “first-degree mixed-race”. Robert Deman lost his job on racial grounds. Johanna Deman, who had previously mended ladies' stockings for a shop, tried to get a better-paid job because she was now the family breadwinner. Fear and mistrust became their constant companions; they felt watched and threatened:

“Then she went to typing and shorthand classes, in the hope of getting a job in an office. There they all stood up – she often told me about this – there was a Hitler celebration and everyone stood up for the Hitler salute. My mum didn't give it; I don't know if she even stood up. Anyway somebody had been watching her; my mum noticed this, because you could be taken away for almost anything... Now she didn't know what to do. Spotting her opportunity she quickly packed up her things. Then a neighbour said to her: ‘Oh, you're already leaving?’

and my mum said, 'no, no, I just need to get something.' Then she left and didn't go back. She couldn't have gone back there."⁴¹

During the November pogrom in 1938 Elsa's father, Robert Deman, was arrested and deported to Dachau under "protective custody". After his release, Johanna Deman decided to emigrate to England so that she could get her husband and daughter to join her. At the same time Robert Deman tried to flee to Switzerland together with some other Austrian Jews, but they were unsuccessful. "A train full of people travelled, but in Switzerland they were denied entry and sent back."⁴²

At first Elsa stayed with her Jewish grandmother, Emma Steinschneider (born 27th June 1875), for whom the situation in Vienna was becoming increasingly dangerous. Finally an aunt took Elsa to Villach, when she was eight year old. With the outbreak of war the situation came to a head:

"My mum came back on the last boat, because they had declared war on England. Then we went to Vienna to visit my grandmother. Of course they had taken away her flat - she did have a nice big flat - and they had put all these old women in a single room together. She told us: 'It's never more than two degrees centigrade in here'. It was just so cold. As soon as the doorbell rang they all trembled with fear. Then they always took one of them away. My grandmother had to wear the Star of David. The Nazis said the Jews are a different race. But I asked myself, why did they need the Star of David? It's surely possible to recognise a different race, isn't it?"⁴³

On 20th May 1942 Elsa's grandmother, Emma Steinschneider was taken from the shared flat and deported. On 26th May she died in the Maly Trostinec concentration camp. Elsa's father Robert Deman, born in Vienna on 12th February 1897, was amongst the victims who were killed on 20th October 1939, during the first big transportation to Nisko.⁴⁴ Together with her mother Johanna, Elsa spent the war years at her aunt's in Villach. However Villach could no longer provide the anonymity of the big city that she had often benefitted from in Vienna:

"They were very hostile towards me at the beginning. They always threw stones at me. 'Yuck, the full Jew!' the neighbours' children shouted after me."⁴⁵

Elsa Deman grew up in constant fear of the Gestapo and of deportation. As a matter of fact, towards the end of the war, the protection presumed to be offered by an "Aryan" parent became increasingly fragile. When eventually arrest became more than just a serious possibility, her uncle - a dyed-in-the-wool Nazi - of all people, rescued her:

"One day, when the Nazis had already been there for a while, they decided to bring in my mum and me. (...) And then my uncle helped us - although he was cross with us anyway. But after all he didn't want us to be taken away. 'No', he said, 'she already had that child before she married. She's not from a Jew. That one is from an Italian.' And the Nazis believed him and didn't look into it. That's the reason why I'm still here."⁴⁶

¹ *Kärntner Volkszeitung*, 20th May 1939, p. 4.

² Merith Niehuss, Eheschließung im Nationalsozialismus, in: Ute Gerhard (editor), *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts. Von der frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 1997, pp. 851-870, here: p. 858.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Freie Stimmen*, 7th May 1938, p. 1.

⁵ Elke Fröhlich (editor), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels, part I: Aufzeichnungen 1923–1941, vol 3/I: April 1934 – February 1936*, Munich 2005, p. 329.

⁶ Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933–1939*, Munich 2000, p. 138.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 177.

⁸ *Kärntner Grenzruf*, 26th Sept 1938, p. 3.

⁹ Jakob Clementschitsch, Witness statement, Restitution Commission, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 26th Oct 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 90/47, Sch. 6.

¹⁰ Josefine Sandriesser, Witness statement, Klagenfurt, 26th Oct 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 90/47, Sch. 6.

¹¹ Arabella Weissberger, Witness statement, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 23rd May 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 148/49, Sch. 43.

¹² Letter from the Sattendorf NSDAP Local Group leadership, to NSDAP District administration Carinthia, Sattendorf, 30th May 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanising Files, Reference Files: Josefine Richter.

¹³ Letter from the Sattendorf NSDAP Local Group leadership, to Emil Richter-Roland, Sattendorf, 7th May 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanising Files, Reference Files: Josefine Richter.

¹⁴ Letter from the Sattendorf NSDAP Local Group leadership, to Emil Richter-Roland, Sattendorf, 7th May 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files, Reference Files: Josefine Richter.

¹⁵ Letter from NSBO District Leadership Villach, to NSBO District Administration, Villach, 23rd May 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files, Reference Files: Josefine Richter.

¹⁶ Letter from Dr. Arnold Peter, to the NSDAP Economic Department Klagenfurt, Leipzig, 3rd July 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files, Reference Files: Josefine Richter.

¹⁷ Letter from Dr. Arnold Peter, to the NSDAP Economic Department Klagenfurt, Leipzig, 3rd July 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files, Reference Files: Josefine Richter.

¹⁸ Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, p. 215.

¹⁹ Letter from Emil Klucka, to Gauleiter Bürckel, Villach, 17th Aug 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files, Preliminary Investigation Files, Eduard Glesinger.

²⁰ Letter from Peter Foiker, to the inspection authorities of the Viennese provisional administrators, Villach, 11th July 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files, Preliminary Investigation Files, Eduard Glesinger.

²¹ Letter from Property Transactions Office Klagenfurt, 16th Sept 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files, Preliminary Investigation Files, Eduard Glesinger.

²² Herbert Werner to the Restitution Commission at the Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 2nd Feb 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 591/48, Sch. 39.

²³ Herbert Werner, appeal to the Villach Magistrate against Trading Licence Withdrawal; Villach, 23rd Aug 1934. City of Villach Museum, propaganda material for the illegal NSDAP, before 1938.

²⁴ *Kärntner Grenzruf*, 31st Jan 1939, p. 7.

²⁵ *Kärntner Grenzruf*, 21st Feb 1939, p. 5.

²⁶ See Beate Meyer, "Jüdische Mischlinge", *Rassenpolitik und Verfolgungserfahrungen 1933–1945*, Hamburg 2002 (= *Studien zur jüdischen Geschichte*, vol 6,), unpaginated (e-book).

²⁷ Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, p. 321.

²⁸ Cited in Merith Niehuss, *Eheschließung im Nationalsozialismus*, p. 868.

²⁹ Cited in Nina Schröder, *Die Frauen der Rosenstraße. Hitlers unbeugsame Gegnerinnen*, Munich 1997, p. 34.

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- ³⁰ For a more detailed account of the Maria Gornik case, see Lisa Rettl/Alexandra Schmidt, “Du kannst Dir meine Verzweiflung kaum vorstellen ...” Maria Gornik (1900–1942), in: Alexandra Schmidt (editor), *Drautöchter. Villacher Frauengeschichte(n)*, Klagenfurt 2013, pp. 194-205.
- ³¹ Report Wilhelm Gornik, 29th Jan 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vg 18 Vr 1201/48, Sch. 383.
- ³² *Ibidem*.
- ³³ Witness statement by Adolf Triebnig, 24th June 1948. KLA, Villach District Court, Z-Files 1941–1947, File 1180/48, Sch. 97.
- ³⁴ Lisa Rettl/Alexandra Schmidt, “Du kannst Dir meine Verzweiflung kaum vorstellen ...”, p. 198.
- ³⁵ Witness statement by Adolf Triebnig, 24th June 1948. KLA, Villach District Court, Z-Files 1941–1947, File 1180/48, Sch. 97.
- ³⁶ Lisa Rettl/Alexandra Schmidt, “Du kannst Dir meine Verzweiflung kaum vorstellen ...”, p. 199.
- ³⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ³⁸ Undated copy of the letter from Maria Gornik, to Wilhelm Gornik, December 1941. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vg 18 Vr 1201/48, Sch. 197.
- ³⁹ See Linde Apel, *Jüdische Frauen im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück 1939–1945*, Berlin 2003 (for the data about Maria Gornik see the enclosed CD).
- ⁴⁰ Elsa S. interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Villach, 13th March 2013.
- ⁴¹ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴² *Ibidem*.
- ⁴³ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴⁴ Dates of birth and death, see DÖW database of the Shoah victims.
- ⁴⁵ Elsa S. interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Villach, 13th March 2013.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

The persecution and expulsion of the Austrian Jews, which began with the Nazi take-over in March, reached its well-prepared, provisional climax in November 1938. On 7th November 1938, the seventeen year old Herschel Feibel Grynszpan, outraged by National-Socialist Jewish policies which also affected his own family, shot several times at Ernst Eduard vom Rath, diplomatic secretary at the German embassy in Paris. When Rath died of his injuries two days later, the Reich's leadership used his death as a pretext for an unprecedented wave of violence against Jewish people across the German Reich. Not only did the National Socialists cynically call the November pogrom “Reichskristallnacht” (crystal night) because of the broken crockery but they also represented it as a spontaneous popular upheaval. Numerous research projects have, however, shown this to be a misrepresentation.¹ When Rath died during the late afternoon of 9th November almost the entire Nazi élite was in Munich, at an annual commemoration ceremony for the “martyrs” of the Hitler-Putsch in November 1923. One day later Joseph Goebbels wrote the following in his diary:

“I go to the Party reception at the Old City Hall. Massive operation. I present the matter to the Führer. He decides: let demonstrations continue. Pull out police. Let the Jews feel the people's anger. That's appropriate. I promptly give relevant instructions to the police and the Party. Then I speak briefly before the Party leadership. Roaring ovation. Everyone rushes to the phone. Now the nation will act.”²

The message Goebbels was giving in his purely spoken instructions was unambiguous: the Party's role as instigator of the pogrom should not be obvious to the outside world. Spreading from Munich on the night of 9th to 10th November, pogroms were unleashed across the whole of the German Reich. They were instigated on the command of the local NSDAP district leaderships and predominantly carried out by plain-clothed SA troops.³ In Carinthia and other Austrian provinces acts of violence only started on the morning of 10th November, because of the time lag in issuing instructions. To start with, and following orders, “healthy male Jews, who were not too old”⁴ and who were as wealthy as possible were arrested right across Carinthia. The victims were taken to the local Gestapo prisons and two days later deported to Dachau, Buchenwald or Sachsenhausen concentration camps.

Amongst them were a number of Villach Jews, such as Philipp Lilian, Philipp Rosenthal, Osias and Ferdinand Fischbach, and Erich Loewe, who were mostly taken to Dachau. As is shown by the prisoner data sheets at the Dachau memorial site, the Jewish prisoners “in protective custody” remained in the concentration camp for an average of two to four weeks. Only Philipp Rosenthal was detained longer, until May 1939.⁵ The intention behind the arrest-actions was not just to intimidate the Jews, but also and above all to blackmail them. Many of the prisoners “in protective custody” only recovered their freedom after agreeing to the “Aryanisation” of their businesses – in so far as this had not yet happened - or after complying with the demand for their immediate emigration.

The imprisonments were followed by orders for waves of destruction across the whole Villach district. As expected, the wives, children and older people who had been left behind

hardly put up any resistance. Commenting on the acts of violence, which also affected her own family living in Klagenfurt, Elvira Itzhaki (née Friedländer) remarked, "That is when they revealed their true colours"⁶.

The various district court records and interviews help reconstruct the sequence of events. As one participant confirmed, District Propaganda Leader, Kurt Ludwig "stood on a platform right beside the Plague Column in Villach's main square in the late morning of 10th November, and delivered an inflammatory denunciation of the Jews". His intent was to create the right atmosphere for the acts of violence that were to take place shortly afterwards. Even as he spoke, some of his audience were already tampering with the shop sign on Philipp Lilian's immediately adjacent business.⁷

In 1947 Kurt Ludwig had to stand trial charged with having incited the population to violence on 10th November 1938. Ludwig denied the prosecution's allegations. In his view, the "event" was just a peaceful gathering of people who were out for a stroll. After a year, criminal proceedings were discontinued by the Austrian People's Court, for lack of evidence, although the suspicions were "not altogether allayed".⁸

Shortly after Ludwig's speech on Villach main square, the NSDAP District Leadership broadcast a demand by radio that all the businesses and schools should "close or suspend lessons immediately, and [people should] move towards the city centre in groups where further instructions would follow".⁹

SA-Sturm 1 troop and SA-Pioniersturm troop Villach had been selected as the destruction and terror squads. Their members were instructed by messengers to gather at particular places in the city shortly before noon. At the specified places, the groups were divided up and the men were given detailed instructions about which Jewish businesses and homes should be ransacked.

The SA troops struck at roughly the same time, shortly after noon, taking the majority of Jewish families completely unawares. The reports of those involved and of other contemporary witnesses offer a compelling picture of events and highlight some traumatic experiences. In an interview, Anton Engelhart from Villach remembered what he had witnessed with his own eyes:

"On that day afternoon lessons were scheduled. When we got to school the caretaker told us: 'There won't be any classes this afternoon, today there's the persecution of the Jews.' So we went straight into town. At the Fischbach shop in Italienerstraße, opposite the 'Libro' bookshop, we watched objects being tossed down from the 1st floor. The people who were doing it were uniformed SA men. The SA people had broken into the place from the courtyard, using a ladder. Everything was thrown down into the road: books, dishes, silver cutlery, bed linen, food, even the curtains. Things they couldn't get through the window they had smashed up first. At the end, great rolls of fabric were thrown down. (...) Now and then, I could see Mrs Fischbach by the window. A second woman was also up there, standing next to her and comforting her. Then I moved on. At Glesinger's (Oberer Kirchplatz square) things were also strewn in the road. (...) The main square was crowded with people. A most incredible uproar. At the base of the Plague Column young people were standing shouting and chanting again and again: 'String up the Jew and hang him high from the lamp post' and 'Jew, croak in your own muck.' I can remember all this very distinctly."¹⁰

THE AUERBACH FAMILY

In 1936 Lothar Auerbach and his wife Hildegard, née Ring, were forced to sell their farm in Silesia because of their Jewish origins. Together with their three small children, they fled to Carinthia, to what they thought would be safety. In Schassbach near Wolfsberg the couple bought the Hölzlhof farm. During the November pogrom Lothar Auerbach was deported to Dachau. On 18th November 1938 his family were given notice either to move forthwith to Vienna or to emigrate.

After a short stop-over in Berlin, the Auerbach family was successful in getting their daughter Ruth to safety in England at the beginning of February 1939, thanks to a Kindertransport (boat for child-refugees). Shortly afterwards the whole family was able to follow.

Lothar Auerbach wrote from Dachau Concentration Camp to his family on the 3rd December 1938:

“My dear Hilda and my beloved children,

I'm very worried because as yet I have heard nothing from you. I hope you're all well, as I am. Get in touch with Moster or Fyn right away [acquaintances in Denmark], so that we can stay there until we get the permits. Prepare everything for the sale, even though the price is low. Write to Gildemeister, Vienna 1 Wollzeile 7, in connection with the transfer possibilities. Try to get a permit as soon as possible and as a matter of the highest priority, wire consent if we can get an English, Danish or any other visa. Let me know immediately when you've got it. Contact Gestapo Klagenfurt, or perhaps best to go in person, with relevant recommendations. (...) Lots of love, L.”

Edith Schnattler, who was an eleven year old schoolgirl and another Villach witness at the time, could never forget the engrained images of the pogrom:

“After school on that day there was a crowd of people standing around in Italienerstraße (street), on the Technischer Hof corner, by Fischbach's shop. I went closer. On the pavement there was a huge heap of all sorts of things – crockery, slashed flour bags, smashed furniture. Many postcards were strewn around. I picked up one of them. I could make out the word 'Galicia' on it; a word I have never again forgotten. Mrs Fischbach was looking out of an open window on the first floor. (...) I knew her because my mother often did her shopping there. She had thrown her hands over her head and was shouting: 'My God, my God, stop this.' Two men grabbed her shoulders and pulled her back. I was shocked and scared. I didn't understand any of this.”¹¹

More and more ghoulish people gathered in front of the homes of their Jewish fellow citizens to watch the spectacle unfold. Many of them applauded and joined in the disturbances by trampling on the things that had been thrown down from the apartments.¹² The main perpetrators – the men of the SA units –worked systematically with the aid of specially prepared “Jew registration lists”. In this, they did not restrict themselves to those who were deemed “pure” Jewish families under the applicable racial theories, but they also targeted people who lived in so-called mixed marriages. At the time of the riots Wilhelm Gornik was in his general store in Villach-Auen. On returning to his flat in Weißbriachgasse, he found his wife had “fainted on a heap of our smashed effects”.¹³ Maria Gornik, who had been alone in the flat, had been exposed to the men's destructive frenzy, with no witnesses present.

When the pogrom took place, Arabella Weissberger was on her own in the flat with her daughter. She described what happened as follows:

“The Nazis broke down the door, and they had a number of tools with them for the job. They set about the furniture and threw almost everything out of the window; they slashed the curtains and pictures and smashed the good china. Then they also threw my husband’s coin collection out of the window, onto the road, and all the jewellery and gemstones they found they either crushed on the floor or threw them out of the windows too.”¹⁴

From the available documentation and statements, it is evident that in many cases the perpetrators gained access to their victims’ flats and houses on pretence of searching for weapons or politically incriminating materials. This was also confirmed by Leon Zwerling, a retired Railway official, who was sixty-eight when the pogrom took place:

“On 10th November 1938 (...) the shopkeeper Franz Wutte (...), the master painter Friedrich Maier (...), the labourer Hubert Lattacher (...) and a certain Hans Triebelnig turned up in my house in Villach, Oberer Heidenweg 34. At the time I was busy in the garden. (...) The master painter Friedrich Maier told me that he was the Sturmführer. He demanded that I surrender my weapons, with the words ‘Jew, hand over your weapons’. I told him that I didn’t have any weapons and they should feel free to search my flat for them. Then all the above-mentioned people entered my first-floor flat. I was again asked to hand over any weapons, and I reaffirmed that I had none. At that Friedrich Maier gave the command ‘go’ and all the people, who had entered my flat against my will, started to destroy my furniture and fittings, and it didn’t even take half an hour until the entire furnishings of 2 rooms, 1 kitchen, 1 larder and 1 bathroom were completely demolished. After this work of destruction they left and locked the flat door behind them leaving the key outside in the keyhole, so that my wife and I were forced to leave the flat by climbing down from the kitchen balcony. On this occasion they also called me and my wife names, such as ‘Jewish bastard’ and ‘Jewish hag’ and the like. Subsequently my wife and I had to sleep on the floor for several days because we no longer had beds. Later our relatives gave us beds and crockery.”¹⁵

Amongst those charged after the war with participating in the pogrom violence at Leon und Anna Zwerling’s flat, only Friedrich Mayer (born 1904) made an honest confession. This is how he described the sequence of events:

“On our way to the Zwerlings’ flat, I had already explained to the 3 SA men what was to be done when we got there. I issued the order to destroy everything in the flat. We all went into the Zwerlings’ flat and began to destroy the furniture and suchlike. Whilst I was in Zwerlings’ kitchen, Lattacher, Wutte and Triebelnig went into Zwerling’s bedroom and started to destroy all their effects there too.”¹⁶

Whilst Mayer expressed remorse for his actions in the lawsuit heard by the People’s Court, his former comrades denied having been involved in this act of vandalism in any capacity. They gave assurances that none of them had ever touched a thing. Neither could they remember who had been responsible for the smashed radio set, the broken dishes, the torn

bed linen and the scattered clothes. According to their statements, it may at least have been possible that one of them had unintentionally dropped the dishes on the floor when leaving the flat.¹⁷

Individual SA troops still continued their acts of destruction until late afternoon and also extended the radius of their actions to the outskirts of Villach. Sonia Gini, her sister and her Jewish mother may well have fled the riots in the city centre. In 1948, when lodging a complaint against the pogrom participants, she placed the following on record:

“In 1938 my parents Josef and Josefine Prassnik had a little summer house on Lake Magdalenensee. On 10th November 1938 I was there with my mother Josefine Prassnik and my sister Herma Prassnik. On the abovementioned day about 20 men in plain clothes turned up around 4 pm. My mother Josefine Prassnik is Jewish. I immediately suspected they would loot and ransack our home as part of the action against the Jews that was then taking place. My mother locked the entrance door; first the men shouted at us that we should open the door, and threatened to shoot the lock off if we didn't open up. At that point [my mother] opened the door, because she was afraid that the men would act upon their threat. When my mother asked them what they wanted, one of these men, whom I didn't know, explained to her that he had come for a boat ride. Then another man explained that they had come to burn the house down. When my mother asked him his name, the man in question said it was Pacher. Then mother answered that the house was not her property, at which the man in question responded that in that case they would only smash the furniture. At this point, my mother fetched Mr. Michael Brandstätter from the nearby inn, who confirmed that neither the furniture nor the house were my parents' property. (...) A certain Strauss, Welz, Ing. Ritzberger and others took part in this action. They cut up our clothes and linen. Only a coat of mine remained undamaged. These terrorists took my mother away with them, and she only returned after 4 days. (...) Apart from our documents the intruders didn't steal anything. But they destroyed all our clothes (with the exception of my winter coat), our linen, china, carpets, mattresses, in short everything we had.”¹⁸

The small towns around Lake Ossiachersee were also affected by the pogroms. In line with the locally based NSDAP group's objective of “cleansing the Ossiachersee of Jews”¹⁹, on 10th November local “Volk and Party members”, with colleagues from Villach, gathered there for a spree of plunder and destruction. One of their targets was Arthur Glesinger's family summer house in St. Urban. In his 1946 testimony, Arthur Glesinger, who returned from Palestine to Villach after the war, placed this on record:

“I wish to report that in November 1938 the National Socialist Martin Geist, together with two other men unknown to me, drove on a motorcycle and side-car from Villach to St. Urban, and there destroyed the furnishings of my summer house, causing me about 4,000 Reichsmarks worth of damage (...). I did not personally witness the incident, but at the time I asked Kofler about it. He was my confidant and had for years kept the keys to my summer house for me. He told me that three men had turned up on a motorcycle and demanded the keys from him. Allegedly he did not know the men but still complied with their demand. He told me that he only did it because the men pressurised him. According to him, these men then demolished the furnishings in my summer house, because I am a Jew. (...) Only after returning from emigration (...) was I able to establish (...) that the leader of the destruction squad was Martin Geist, son-in-law of the St. Urban railway watchman, Kofler. At the end of

the war Geist shot himself in Villach. Now I could understand the behaviour of my confidant Kofler, since his own son-in-law had been involved. This also explained why he had supposedly not recognised anybody.”²⁰

In 1938 close neighbours and people who had been trusted for years suddenly turned into delinquents and their accessories. Next to the Glesingers' family house, the Loewe family's *Berghof* estate in Heiligengestade also fell victim to the destructive wrath of these men. However, in this disturbance, different participants were involved, including some Villach National Socialists who were apparently well known in the city. By contrast the property of the Stein and Richter families, who lived in Sattendorf, was spared. According to the testimony of the then deputy mayor of Treffen, Heinrich Schützenhofer, the SA squad had already arrived, when he personally managed to keep them from ransacking the two houses. This was because the owners of the two house, Melitta Stein and Josefine Richter, were “Aryan” women, and their Jewish husbands were (no longer) present.²¹ As a matter of fact Gustav Stein had died in the summer of 1938 and Emil Richter-Roland was in Vienna at that time.

Apart from the Jewish homes on Lake Ossiachersee the hit-squads also paid a visit to Dr. Gustav Baum, a factory director, who lived in the municipality of Weißenstein near Villach. SA member Johann Mießbichler and his shock troops had earlier been at the Weissberger family home, and by his own testimony, he had only taken a look at a book there; in Weißenstein he “didn't do a thing” either.²² Meanwhile the Reich leadership was trying to stem the tide of violence, for fear of losing control of the riots.

Their concerns were of course less for the Jewish victims, than for “Aryan” properties endangered by the burning of adjoining Synagogues and Prayer Houses.

DR. GUSTAV BAUM

Dr. Gustav Baum worked as director of the *Österreichische Chemische Werke* (ÖCW) in Weißenstein from 1912 to 1938. He was also Mayor of Weißenstein from 1921 to 1924. Dr. Baum lived with his wife Ilse in the ÖCW company's “director's villa”, which was seriously damaged during the November pogrom. Soon after, the couple left Carinthia and fled to London, before finally emigrating to the U.S.A.

On the morning of 10th November the Jewish Prayer House in Klagenfurt was indeed destroyed, but unlike other synagogues and Jewish institutions it did not fall victim to the flames. Joseph Goebbels issued the order that all actions “are now to cease at the same speed as that with which they began. They have fulfilled their desired and expected purpose”.²³ Odilo Globocnik, then Gauleiter of Vienna and former Carinthian Party comrade, reported that the order to stop the pogroms arrived at around 4pm. However the riots did not end until three hours later.

Either the order failed to reach Velden, or it was simply ignored. The riots did not start there until the evening of 10th November – that is to say, at a point in time when the rioting had already subsided elsewhere. In Velden particular targets for destruction were summer residences and hotels owned by Jewish families.

Although the riotous activities did not meet with the approval of the entire Carinthian population, any sympathy or outrage were almost exclusively expressed only in private. Very few people were courageous enough to show their empathy and solidarity in public. A

remarkable case in point is the open protest by Johannes Heinzelmann, then Protestant Superintendent. Reports say that during the pogrom demonstratively “wearing his Lutheran vestments he visited a well known Villach Jew, and that he told everybody he met all about it”.²⁴

After the pogroms had run their course, the political élite legitimised the upheavals through the use of posters and the media. The *Kärntner Grenzruf* (newspaper) played down the whole sequence of violent excesses: “The outraged population vented their hatred for the Jews through parades and riotous assemblies and by shouting slogans”. What’s more “a significant number of weapons, inflammatory Communist materials as well as stashes of unregistered foreign currencies” had been uncovered.²⁵ The riots were also the subject of a political meeting held at the Gasthof Kasino (inn) in central Villach on 12th November. The *Kärntner Volkszeitung* reported it in great detail:

“It was last Thursday that the seething spirit of the people erupted in righteous indignation and this was vented in a series of spontaneous direct actions. These demonstrations expressed an unbending will to settle the Jewish problem once and for all, and to use all legal means to fend off Jewish attacks. Party member Czeitschner, leader of the local Villach Centre NSDAP group, rose to speak (...).

He emphasised that the individual actions had been neither wanted nor ordered by the responsible Party officials, even though that would have been psychologically understandable enough in light of the Jews’ impudent infringements. (...) However if a few over-sensitive members of the Volk-community criticised the actions too sharply, they should indeed consider which did the greater damage – that a radio, or piano was thrown into the street and smashed, or that the lives of German people were destroyed as a result of the reign of terror unleashed by the Jews, in their unholy alliance with Clericalism and Communism. (...) A sense of outrage was provoked by the fact that a cache of weapons had been found in the Jew Weißberger’s house on Peraustraße, as had also been the case in other cities and towns of the Ostmark.”²⁶

The November pogroms also inspired a further radicalisation of the National Socialists’ Jewish policies. As early as 12th November high-ranking representatives of the Reich government gathered at the Berlin Aviation Ministry, including numerous Austrian delegates. With Hermann Göring in the chair, its purpose was to decide on the way forward with the “Jewish question”. What was distinctive about this meeting, which was followed by a flood of anti-Jewish laws, was its unscrupulous mood: remarking upon the material damage caused during the pogrom, in his capacity as Minister for Economic Affairs Göring stated “I would rather you had slaughtered 200 Jews and that such assets had not been destroyed”²⁷. As the historian Raphael Gross put it plainly in his book *November 1938*, the November pogrom was “the catastrophe before the catastrophe”.²⁸

The National Socialists had now largely achieved their primary political objective, namely the expulsion of the remaining Jewish population. The vast majority of Carinthian Jews left and headed towards Vienna, either to emigrate from there immediately – if they were lucky – or to clear the extremely laborious and tricky bureaucratic hurdles in the way of their escape. Only in exceptional cases could the courts prove offenders’ direct involvement in the events of the November 1938 pogrom. The destruction and looting of Jewish businesses and homes, frequently accompanied by the humiliation of any Jewish people who were present, had been well prepared by the NSDAP district leaderships, and mostly carried out by plain-

clothed SA members. These men were to a large extent, reliable Party members who were steadfast in their ideology and outlook. Almost all the accused had been “illegals” and NSDAP members since 1933 or were part of the SA.

Only conspicuous participants in the direct actions had to stand trial before the Austrian People’s Court after the War. Prosecutions were usually based on Paragraphs 3 and 4 of the War Criminals Act, according to which “torture and maltreatment” as well as “crimes against humanity and the violation of human dignity” represented criminal offences. There was of course no legal resort in this situation against the many bystanders who had simply helped themselves to items thrown from the windows, or who had encouraged offenders in their actions.

Prosecutions could only be instigated if an offender had “personally entered into dealings with a particular Jewish family” and if it could be proved that he had forced his way into the home of the said persons. The legal view was taken, however, that a person did not have to have been actively involved in the destructive work, but that merely being present at the riotous action was sufficient for liability to be sentenced by the court. The defence mounted by those who were accused usually followed along similar lines. They tried to argue that they had only entered the Jewish home, once it had already been completely ransacked. When it could be proved that they had been in the building at the time of despoliation, they said they took no part in it. When they were accused of acquiring property belonging to another person, they said they only wanted to save it from being destroyed.

Most of those charged got away with light penalties. In extremely rare cases sentences of one year’s imprisonment were handed down. A striking number of incriminatory witness statements were subsequently withdrawn – apparently after prior agreement with the accused.

In many cases overall responsibility was transferred onto a person now beyond the reach of the court - someone who had either been killed in the war or who was being held in a prisoner-of-war camp. Many of those charged tried to offset their culpability in relation to the November pogrom by pointing to their wartime service, where they had “always” fought “in the front line, for their beloved fatherland”,²⁹ at the same time expressing their willingness to help with reconstruction.

A remarkable feature of the whole sequence of court cases is the sheer number of medical reports and certificates, attesting that once active National Socialists now suffered from serious illnesses and impairment of memory. Some Pogrom offenders took refuge in self-pity and assumed the role of innocent seduced victims.

In the course of these criminal proceedings, the actual victims got no compensation for material damage. To claim compensation they had to instigate separate proceedings in the civil court, which could last years.

The political bosses behind the scenes of the pogrom seldom had to stand trial before the People’s Court, as was admitted in an opinion delivered in July 1947:

“In relation to the punishment of those charged and convicted, it must be noted that they were not the persons primarily responsible for the events in Villach. Those persons are to be sought amongst the circles of higher-ranking Party functionaries (...). Consequently the people sentenced here are for the most part relatively low-ranking SA members, who simply complied with and executed orders given by their superiors.”³⁰

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- ¹ See, for example Raphael Gross, November 1938. Die Katastrophe vor der Katastrophe, Munich 2013; Saul Friedländer, Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933–1939, Munich 2000; Stiftung Topografie des Terrors (editors), Die Novemberpogrome 1938. Versuch einer Bilanz, Berlin 2009; Dieter J. Hecht/Eleonore Lappin/ Michaela Raggam-Blesch/Heidemarie Uhl/Lisa Retzl (editors), 1938. Auftakt zur Shoah in Österreich. Orte – Bilder – Erinnerungen, Vienna 2008; Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (editor), “Anschluss“ 1938. Eine Dokumentation, Vienna 1988; Hans Safrian/Hans Witek, Und keiner war dabei. Dokumente des alltäglichen Antisemitismus in Wien 1938, Vienna 1988; Kurt Schmid/Robert Streibel (editors), Das Pogrom 1938. Judenverfolgung in Österreich und Deutschland, Vienna 1990; Wilhelm Wadl/Alfred Ogris, Das Jahr 1938 in Kärnten und seine Vorgeschichte. Ereignisse – Dokumente – Bilder, Klagenfurt 1988.
- ² Elke Fröhlich (editor), Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels, part I: Aufzeichnungen 1923–1941, vol 6: August 1938 – Juni 1939, Munich 1998, p. 180.
- ³ See Raphael Gross, November 1938, pp. 46 ff.
- ⁴ Cited in August Walzl, Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich, Klagenfurt 2009, p. 213.
- ⁵ See the prisoner data sheets listed in alphabetical order by names, at the Dachau Memorial Archive.
- ⁶ Elvira Itzhaki interviewed by Werner Koroschitz and Alexandra Schmidt, Tel Aviv, 30th Sept 2013.
- ⁷ Examination of Leopold Huber, Villach, 7th June 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1834/46, Sch. 235.
- ⁸ Decision by Provincial Court of Graz, 11th Sept 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 588/52, Sch. 450.
- ⁹ Bill of indictment against participants of the Jewish pogroms, Villach, 29th Jan 1947. KLA, Villach District Court, Z Files, 1692/47, Sch. 94.
- ¹⁰ Anton Engelhart interviewed by Hans Haider, Villach, September 1998. Cited in Hans Haider, Nationalsozialismus in Villach, Klagenfurt 2008, p. 93.
- ¹¹ Edith Schnattler interviewed by Hans Haider, Villach, 7th Oct 1998. Cited in Hans Haider, Nationalsozialismus in Villach, Klagenfurt 2008, p. 104.
- ¹² Examination of Rudolf Laubreiter, Villach, 24th Sept 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 3065/46, Sch. 263.
- ¹³ Recorded by Wilhelm Gornik as part of the People’s Court trial against Stefanie Raunjak, 16th Sept 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vg 18 Vr 1201/48, Sch. 197.
- ¹⁴ Report by Arabella Weissberger, to the Ministry for Asset Protection and Economic Planning, Villach, 2nd Feb 1948. Cited in August Walzl, Die Juden in Kärnten, p. 214.
- ¹⁵ Report by Leon Zwerling, Villach, 21st Oct 1945. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 463/45, Sch. 196.
- ¹⁶ Examination of Friedrich Mayer, Villach, 7th Dec 1945. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 436/46, Sch. 196.
- ¹⁷ Examination of Hubert Lattacher, Villach, 24th Nov 1945. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 436/46, Sch. 196.
- ¹⁸ Witness statement by Sonia Gini, Villach, 7th Oct 1948. KLA, Villach District Court, Z-Files, Z1177/48, Sch. 97.
- ¹⁹ Letter from the Sattendorf local NSDAP group, to NSDAP District Administration Carinthia; Sattendorf, 30th May 1938. StLA, FLD, Aryansiation Files, Reference Files: Josefine Richter.
- ²⁰ Report by Arthur Glesinger against participants in the Jewish pogrom; Villach, 18th Dec 1947. KLA, Villach District Court, Z-Files, Z179/48, Sch. 95.
- ²¹ Witness statement, Heinrich Schützenhofer, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 17th July 1947. KLA, RK 90/47, Sch. 6.
- ²² For further details about Johann Mießbichler see letter from Criminal Investigation-Local Force Villach, to Villach District Court; Villach, 3rd June 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1834/46, Sch. 235.
- ²³ Raphael Gross, November 1938, p. 63.

²⁴ Joachim Rathke, *Die evangelische Kirche in Kärnten*, Klagenfurt 1981, p. 106.

²⁵ *Kärntner Grenzruf*, 11th Nov 1938, p. 6.

²⁶ *Kärntner Volkszeitung*, 16th Nov 1938, p. 5.

²⁷ Cited in Volker Ullrich, *Adolf Hitler. Die Jahre des Aufstiegs 1889–1939*, Frankfurt/Main 2013, p. 749.

²⁸ Raphael Gross, November 1938, p. 11.

²⁹ Max Strauss to the Villach Deregistration Office; Villach, 17th Feb 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 2113/46, Sch. 241.

³⁰ 33 Opinion of the court, Graz People's Court, Senate of Klagenfurt, 3rd July 1947. KLA, Villach District Court, Z Files, 1692/47, Sch. 94.

Towards the end of the 19th century city-dwellers started to show interest in buying holiday homes in their favourite summer resorts. Instead of renting for the summer in one of the “Danube Monarchy’s” tourist centres, they preferred to spend their holidays in their own villa. This allowed them to enjoy nature together with relatives, friends and guests. Because of increasing demand, building plots and residential properties particularly in Velden am Wörthersee could profitably be sold to interested parties from faraway places. Amongst these buyers were Jewish people from Vienna, Graz, Bohemia and Moravia. Of course such purchases of real estate were only open to a small élite of wealthy people. The majority of Jewish families and visitors still continued to rent accommodation privately in a guesthouse or at an inn – depending on their preferences, on availability, and on their financial circumstances. In 1905 Balthasar Schmölzer, commander of the Velden local gendarmerie reported:

“Ministers, high-ranking military officers and senior civil servants were in the habit of staying in the very popular bathing resorts. Nor was there a lack of very wealthy villa owners, whom one addressed with the handle ‘von’, even though and despite their millions, not all of them were aristocrats.”¹

This was followed by a list of villa owners, including some Jewish families, all of whom “belonged to the ranks of the most fortunate, and who contributed in exemplary manner to the flourishing of Velden as a health resort, and as the pearl of Lake Wörthersee”.² To give an example, in 1894 the Jewish military doctor Sigmund Ornstein, who was stationed in Villach with the Imperial and Royal Army, successfully applied for the position of Spa physician for the Velden summer season. In 1905 Dr. Gottfried Engstler was another Spa doctor to settle in Velden. When he launched his medical practice he complained about the “strong, well established Jewish competition” and “their petty, nagging rivalry”.³ Apart from a few anti-Semitic articles in the German nationalist press, there is no evidence that local residents were from the outset hostile towards Jewish guests or villa owners in any way that went beyond the most basic suspicion. Only with the First World War did hostility towards the Jewish population increase, so that their post-1867 constitutional status as equal citizens was again called into question. Local gendarmerie commander, Schmölzer, who was a convinced German nationalist, summarised in his diary what he considered to be the Jews’ negative influence on the development of Velden as a health resort, drawing on a very rich reserve of anti-Semitic prejudices. “Year on year this gorgeous health-Spa is being progressively jewified. People coming from the promised-land have driven away the other, honest health-Spa visitors”, he noted gloomily.⁴ In 1930 the membership of the Velden Spa Commission included the Jewish hotel owner Louise Hecht-Neustadtl and the Jewish lawyer Dr. Egon Weissberger. Apart from his responsibility for legal matters, the latter also contributed greatly to the town’s cultural invigoration. By then the Commission already included National Socialists too, for example the teacher Walter Unterwelz. In point of fact, besides non-Jewish physicians and German nationalist gendarmerie officers, it was mainly the National-Socialist minded teachers who regarded the presence of Jewish guests and property owners as a potential threat to the bathing resort. The real threat to Velden, however, was from the National Socialist terror attacks that were especially de-

stabilising during these years and that did the wider Austrian economy great harm. Particularly in tourism communities, these targeted attacks resulted in appreciable loss of turnover. In this connection, Velden teacher Rudolf Mößlacher was arrested as early as the summer of 1933. As the NSDAP local group leader he had significant influence on followers of the already banned National Socialist Party.⁵ In June 1934 the Nazis perpetrated several bomb attacks in Pörschach, and late in the evening of 9th July 1934 an explosive device was detonated in Velden, in front of Louise Hecht-Neustadt's *Excelsior* hotel. The serving security commissioner suspected teachers Walter Unterwelz and Rudolf Mößlacher of instigating the attack and threatened to have them transferred to Wöllersdorf detention camp.⁶

During the course of the National Socialists' attempted coup on 25th July 1934, the Velden gendarmerie arrested thirty-nine participants in the putsch. They "were released after a while because of overcrowding in the lock-ups, although some of them were detained at Wöllersdorf detention camp"⁷ In any case, because of these events the majority of holiday visitors hastily left Carinthia.

When the National Socialist takeover finally came in 1938, the townspeople of Velden greeted it with "indescribable exultation". On the evening of 11th March itself, the majority of the population gathered in front of the town hall for "Anschluss" celebrations led by the two teachers Unterwelz and Mößlacher.

The enthusiasm also left its mark in the School Chronicle, where, in response to current events, the "end of the Jewish-Clerical domination" and the elimination of "criminals, Jews and traitors" were announced.⁸ The municipality was just as rapturous about the fact that Jewish visitors now stayed away, because "in the previous years they had thought they could have the health Spa all to themselves". The "decline in Jewish visitors" was allegedly compensated for by the influx of holiday makers from the German Reich.⁹ After the "Anschluss", any regular Jewish visitors who arrived at Lake Wörthersee for a summer holiday were now driven out of town. In July 1938 Joseph Goebbels received an enthusiastic welcome in Velden - Rudolf Mößlacher delivered the speech of welcome.

On 10th November the anti-Jewish riots only started in the late afternoon in Velden. But they were all the more thorough for that. Earlier in the day, a propaganda demonstration attended by local Party functionaries had taken place in Karawankenplatz square (Adolf-Hitlerplatz as it then was); Unterwelz used it to get the people in the mood for violent excesses.¹⁰ As the demonstration was still in progress, two SA destruction squads were being assembled at the nearby fire station with orders to ransack Jewish houses. Without delay, the first group made a start on the Loewenfeld-Russ, Mayer and Freißler family villas, smashing everything to splinters and fragments.

In the meantime the second shock-unit was doing its worst on *Villa Kern* and *Villa Weishut*. The men systematically wrecked furnishings, tiled stoves, windows, tiles, toilet pans; they tore out the door frames and ripped the wiring from the walls.¹¹

The havoc wrought on their properties by local SA troopers - formerly neighbours and acquaintances - of course horrified the house owners in question, but they also expressed a deep sense of hurt and betrayal. In April 1939 Hans Loewenfeld-Russ composed an obituary for "his beloved Velden":

"On the afternoon of 10th November 1938 a horde of about 20 men equipped with hatchets, axes and paving stones and led by Unterwelz, a Velden teacher and the local National Socialist group's 'guardian of culture', burst into our property - which they labelled

'Jewish'(...). Within an hour all the furniture and fittings had been destroyed by vandalism from top to bottom. The internal staircase, all the stoves, the toilet facilities, the bathroom fittings, all the windows, bull's-eye panes and mirrors, the entire furnishings, including many valuable old pieces of furniture and clocks that had been inherited and collected over many years were destroyed and some of them thrown from the windows and down the embankment. They tore down chandeliers and curtains, slashed pictures and mattresses, smashed expensive dinner services and glassware, and wrecked the balconies and wood panelling. The house looked like a ruin in next to no time. A Klagenfurt friend, who had served at the front for four years during the First World War, inspected the house shortly after the act of destruction. He informed me that he had never seen such vandalism during the whole of the War.

Within a few minutes many personal mementos of my parents, who had lived in this house for decades and even died there, many memories of my own youth and of my children's early years were annihilated by this senseless violence. (...) Everything that my whole heart went out to had been destroyed, and the wounds that I suffered because of this will never fully heal. (...) The fact that such a brutal and illegal act could be performed in peace time, in a country that prides itself on being the pinnacle of human culture, without the perpetrators being held responsible; the fact that this act was motivated by a teacher who arrogantly styles himself 'guardian of culture' and who is still allowed to continue teaching the young, who are the treasure of any nation; and the fact that honest people do not dare express an opinion on such an atrocity – these facts all speak for themselves, they characterise the circumstances under which we are living and the moral degeneration of the present day. A later generation will pass their judgements on the guilty!"¹²

In the course of time, however, it was still the same generation that passed legal judgement on the November pogroms, by acquitting those involved. When enquiries about participation in the pogroms started in 1946, all of the suspects pleaded not guilty. They defended themselves by claiming either that they had not even been in Velden at the time, or that they had only been bystanders. And indeed there may have been many eager spectators; one defendant reported a "whole swarm of nosy people standing around gawping whilst the villas were destroyed".¹³ Others justified themselves by admitting that they had been present at the events, but without any personal involvement. Some said they had only been there in the aftermath of the raids and had puzzled over the "scattered, broken bits and pieces".¹⁴ And still others claimed substantial gaps in their memory, which they accounted for as effects of the tribulations they had experienced as Prisoners of War.¹⁵ Two participants said that they had saved *Villa Weishut* from further damage by their courageous intervention: they claimed they had secretly demolished the electricity fuse-box, so that the vandals were forced to stop their destructive work in the pitch-dark house.¹⁶

Despite the fact that the Jewish properties had evidently been destroyed by local SA men, none of the witnesses was able or willing to give further details about those individuals accused of being the protagonists. The damage done by the destruction squads amounted in all events to several hundred thousand Reichsmarks.

By November 1938 systematic, bureaucratised theft of Jewish property was of course well under way in Velden, as elsewhere. Some of the Jewish owners had already been forced to sell their properties even before the November pogrom, yet in the ongoing "Aryanisation" process all the "Jewish villas" would fall into "Aryan hands".

VILLA SCHICK – THE KERN FAMILY

In 1899 timber merchant Leopold Kern, who lived in Vienna, had purchased the lakeside *Villa Schick* in Augsdorf. He was also the owner of an estate in Neubistritz, (today Nová Bystřice in the Czech Republic, near the Austrian frontier). After the deaths of Leopold Kern (1842–1903) and his wife Helene (1857–1915), their property was divided equally amongst their six children, Walter, Bruno, Kurt, Raoul, Lisbeth and Marianne.

The step-by-step expropriation of the Kern family's assets affected both the extensive estate in Neubistritz and the villa on Lake Wörthersee - which was ransacked on 10th November 1938. On 1st August 1940 the Klagenfurt Gestapo ordered the confiscation of the wrecked house. The Carinthian Reich Governor promised the Kern "Jewish villa" to industrialist Dr. Anton Apold and on 16th January 1941 he bought the estate of about five hectares including residential buildings, as well as a gardener's house and boat-house for 100,000 Reichsmarks.

Apold had been a member of the NSDAP and of SA Brigade 6, predominantly made up of industrial magnates, since the beginning of 1934. In his capacity as Director General of *Alpine Montangesellschaft* and as President of the *Wiener Merkur* bank – an institution that enjoyed the trust of the German Reich government - he had provided much needed financial support for the Nazi movement in Austria during its years as a banned organisation. After the July putsch in 1934 the Austrian government of the day had suspected Apold of being one of the attempted coup's financial backers. They had him removed from all public sector economic posts and fined him 349,000 Schillings. As a leading businessman, he was one of the Austrians who had played key roles in actively preparing for the country's "annexation" by the German Reich.¹⁷ After the "Anschluss", Apold was appointed Chief Executive of *Länderbank Wien AG* (bank), as a reward for his services to the National Socialist movement. He "Aryanised" a residential building in Vienna as bank premises and reserved the entire second floor as his own living quarters.¹⁸ Again by way of "Aryanisation", he also acquired a block of shares in the *Gösser Brauerei AG* (brewery), from the Jewish shareholders of the *Reininghaus Brauerei AG* (brewery).

However, according to Apold's later statement the purchase of the Kern "Jewish property" was "not only no personal gain, but rather, a bad, loss-making bargain"¹⁹.

Moritz Czeitschner, then Mayor of Velden, acted as Apold's trustee for the Kern property. After the purchase had successfully gone through, he knew he could count on the industrial magnate and old comrade's co-operation of within the municipality. In 1920 Czeitschner had himself been promoted Regional Chairman of the German National Socialist Labour Party, and he had been active in the NSDAP since 1927. As Mayor and NSDAP local group leader for the municipality of Velden, he knew how to take full advantage of his powers.²⁰ After the War, the British authorities arrested Anton Apold and detained him in a succession of de-Nazification camps until 1948. His former Party comrade Moritz Czeitschner, of all people, was called as a witness for the defence.

At least three of the Kern siblings did not experience liberation from National Socialism. The physician Dr. Walter Kern was deported from Theresienstadt concentration camp to Auschwitz on 26th October 1942. His brother Raoul died in a camp in Budapest and Marianne Kern lost her life in a camp in Slovakia.

VILLA SCHUR – THE SCHUR FAMILY

The Viennese industrialist, Moritz Schur, who also operated factories in Czechoslovakia, was the owner of the grand *Villa Schur* in Velden. After his death in 1936 the extensive property was shared out between his children Johann, Helene and Emmy.

In January 1939 the Reich Association of Railway Corporations located in Berlin, contacted the Austrian Reich Governor, on the recommendation of Moritz Czeitschner, Mayor of Velden. They requested permission to acquire the land owned by the Jews Johann Schur, Helene Schwarz (née Schur) and Emmy Goldschmidt (née Schur), as a recreational home for their loyal members.²¹

However, by then the villa had long since been “placed in safe keeping” by the Gestapo. So the plans of the German Railwaymen fell through in the face of different Carinthian plans. On 23rd March 1939 the Klagenfurt Gestapo office gave consideration to establishing a youth centre “in the villa-style building with its park-like estate on the south shore of Lake Wörthersee”.

It was announced that, for this reason, “the municipality of Velden declares itself willing to purchase the estate for 5–8.000 RM, to erect a hostel for the Hitler Youth. Although the value of the property is significantly higher, the purchase price proposed by the municipality of Velden seems appropriate, considering the planned utilisation”.²²

On the recommendation of the Property Transactions Office, a trustee was appointed to oversee the sale of the Schurs’ property. He first conducted a private sale of the villa’s furniture and artworks – valuable pictures, tapestries and carpets.²³ Johann Schur’s subsequent application for restitution noted that many bargain-hunting Velden citizens profited from the auction.²⁴ Not least amongst the auctioned goods were several motor- and sailing-boats.

The villa itself was confiscated by a ruling of the Klagenfurt Gestapo office of 14th October 1939, and until the end of the war it was used as the Regional Leader School.²⁵

The members of the Schur family were able to reach safety in England and Uruguay.

ARNOLD WEISSBRUNN

Arnold Weissbrunn was successful in the textile business. In 1928 the Viennese industrialist purchased a small field in Velden, for 9,000 Schillings.

On 3rd November 1939 Dr. Ines Blahut bought the plot for 2,000 Reichsmarks, thanks to the mediation of her father, Heinz Erian, briefly Mayor of Velden. Arnold Weissbrunn and his wife Ilka had already fled to London in September 1938. In 1947 the couple now living in New York requested the restitution of their property. Their application was amongst those rare cases that were duly processed without difficulty.²⁶

VILLA ORNSTEIN – PAUL ORNSTEIN

The *Emilien Heim* had originally been bought by the Velden Spa doctor, Dr. Sigmund Ornstein and in 1938 it was the property of his heir, Dr. Paul Ornstein.

As a “Jewish property” the villa was ransacked by an SA squad on 10th November 1938. According to Paul Ornstein, Otto Maier “at the head of a gang of Nazis, forced his way into my house and with his own hands took part in the destruction”. Maier was subsequently able to take possession of the building, by means of a purchase agreement dated 24th March 1939.²⁷

In this connection, a letter to the Villach District Authority's Property Control Board in February 1947 is noteworthy. In it Wilhelm Reichhart, appointed as public administrator, explicitly drew attention to the unusual circumstances behind the purchase contract:

"In my report about confiscated property of 24th Oct 1946, under the heading 'description of transfer of ownership', I put 'Jew' in brackets after the name of the seller, and after the name of the purchaser I wrote 'illegal Nazi activist' in brackets. In my view it was necessary to highlight this in relation to this particular 'transfer of ownership', so that the official responsible should have a clear picture of the 'contractual partners' at that time. (...) Now Otto Maier's wife has turned up and is complaining that I drew the relevant office's attention to her husband's political past, despite the alleged fact that, even according to the relevant office, this had not been asked for."²⁸

On 17th December 1946, Paul Ornstein, then living in New York, applied for restitution of his property. By that time, Otto Maier had rented out two apartments in the villa, and one room plus storage space he placed free of charge at the disposal of the municipality of Velden. The first floor had been reserved for his own use.

VILLA ANNI – CAMILLA WEISHUT

Camilla Weishut, born in Pilsen in 1855 and living in Vienna, was eighty-three years old in 1938, when she managed to flee to neighbouring Switzerland. When the Eleventh Decree of the Reich Citizenship Law came into effect in November 1941, her last remaining property in Austria was transferred to the German Reich. On 20th February 1942, with authorisation from Gauleiter Rainer, the municipality of Velden completed the purchase of Camilla Weishut's villa, in her absence as an exile. The purchase price of 22,068 Reichsmarks amounted to about a third of its estimated market value.²⁹

Seven days after the conclusion of a contract so advantageous to Velden municipality, Camilla Weishut died penniless in Lausanne. Her descendants were also refugees, scattered around the world.

The Klagenfurt Gestapo office had dropped its original plan to sell the property to the Carinthian provincial government for as little as 10,000 Reichsmarks, so that it could be used to establish an institute for plant-biology. Instead, the municipality adapted the building for rented housing. By January 1946 the former villa comprised six apartments that were rented out, and six rooms that had been commandeered by the British military authorities.³⁰ In a restitution settlement dated 23rd November 1950 the municipality of Velden accepted the claim by Camilla Weishut's heir, Dr. Hans Weishut living in São Paulo and committed themselves to relocating the tenants living in *Villa Anni*.

EDIHAUS – HERMINE FREISSLER

Hermine Freissler was a pensioner from Vienna, who did not live to see the November pogrom that claimed her country house amongst its victims. She died in Velden on 1st July 1938, at the age of sixty-nine. The *Edihaus*, also referred to as *Villa Wallner* in some documents, was seized by the Gestapo in June 1939. In February 1940 the Reich Minister of the Interior attested to subversive anti-Volk and anti-state activities, on the part of the deceased Hermine Freissler and her only heir, Fritz Flesch. Consequently, and even in law, there was nothing to stop them from confiscating the property. With Heinrich Himmler's approval, on 26th March 1940 the *Edihaus* was handed over to the municipality of Velden.³¹

Henceforth, the municipal kindergarten was accommodated in the villa. On 30th September 1950 the kindergarten was closed and the building reverted to its legal owner.

¹ Cited in Karl Frick/Hans Viertler, *Geschichte der Marktgemeinde Velden am Wörther See 1850 bis 1918*, vol 1, Velden am Wörthersee 2001, p. 160.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 149.

⁴ Cited in Karl Frick/Hans Viertler, *Geschichte der Marktgemeinde Velden am Wörther See März 1938 bis Mai 1945*, vol 3, Velden am Wörthersee 2002, p. 77.

⁵ Chronicle of Velden Primary School; Velden Municipal and Homeland Archives.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Chronicle of Velden Gendarmerie; Velden Municipal and Homeland Archives.

⁸ Chronicle of the Velden Primary School.

⁹ Velden Gendarmerie chronicle.

¹⁰ Report by the Velden am Wörthersee local gendarmerie, to Klagenfurt public prosecutors; Velden am Wörthersee, 14th Sept 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1207/47, Sch. 321.

¹¹ Expert witness statement, Klagenfurt, 21st June 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1022/47, Sch. 316.

¹² Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, *Erinnerungen an den Seehof in Velden (1884–1939)*, written in 1938/39, in: Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, *Aus dem Notizbuche meines Lebens*, vol 1, Vienna 1943. ÖStA, AVA, Finance and Exchequer Archives, E/1702, 16-19.

¹³ Record of interrogation of Erich Kuich, Villach District Court, 30th Sept 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1207/47, Sch. 321.

¹⁴ Record of interrogation of Blasius Perdacher, Villach District Court, 30th Sept 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1207/47, Sch. 321.

¹⁵ Record of interrogation of Karl Kastelic, Villach District Court, 21st Oct 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1207/47, Sch. 321.

¹⁶ Records of interrogation of Raimund Feriencic and Heinrich Schneider, Velden am Wörthersee local gendarmerie, 7th and 8th Nov 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1207/47, Sch. 321.

¹⁷ Federal Ministry for the Interior, to the public prosecutors at People's Court, Vienna, 20th May 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1022/47, Sch. 316.

¹⁸ Witness report, Provincial Court of Vienna, 23rd Aug 1946. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1022/47, Sch. 316.

¹⁹ Dr. Anton Apold, minutes, no place, undated. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Criminal Files, Vr 1022/47, Sch. 316.

²⁰ Alfred Elste, *Kärntens braune Elite*, Klagenfurt/Celovec 1997, p. 43.

²¹ Reich Association of Railway Corporations, to the Austrian Reich governor, Berlin, 23rd Jan 1939. StLA, FLD-Aryanisation Files, Reference Files: Johann Schur.

²² Klagenfurt Gestapo office, to the Klagenfurt Property Transactions Office, 23rd March 1939. StLA, FLD Aryanisation Files, Reference Files: Johann Schur.

²³ Johann Schur's Declaration of property, to the Property Transactions Office Vienna, 2nd Feb 1939. ÖStA, AdR, BMF, VVSt, VA, FLD: Johann Schur, ZI. 19995.

²⁴ Johann Schur, restitution applications, Restitution Commission, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Vienna, January 1956. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 9-26/506, Sch. 67.

²⁵ August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich*, Klagenfurt 1987, p. 190.

²⁶ KLA, Villach District Authority, Administration of Confiscated Property, Sch. 148.

²⁷ Administration report, to Villach District Authority, Velden am Wörthersee, 30th Dec 1947. KLA, Villach District Authority, Administration of Confiscated Property, Sch. 148.

²⁸ Letter from Wilhelm Reichhart, to Villach District Authority, Velden am Wörthersee, 24th Oct 1946. KLA, Villach District Authority, Administration of Confiscated Property, Sch. 148.

²⁹ Restitution Inquiries File RK 167/49, from Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, to the Vienna "Victims of Political Persecution: Compensation Fund for Loss of Property"; Klagenfurt, 15th Oct 1962. ÖStA, AdR, BMF, VVSt, VA, FLD: Gertrude Hirsch, née Weishut, ZI. 7138.

³⁰ Austrian military government, Property Register, Velden am Wörthersee 1946. KLA, Villach District Authority, Administration of Confiscated Property, Sch. 148.

³¹ Austrian military government, Property Register, Velden am Wörthersee 1946. KLA, Villach District Authority, Administration of Confiscated Property, Sch. 148.

THE LOEWENFELD-RUSS FAMILY Seehof

Franziska Mayer, the wife of a Viennese silk merchant and grandmother of Hans Loewenfeld had first discovered *Villa Seehof* in 1884.¹ At that time Velden was still an unsophisticated little place for summer holidays, not yet a glamorous health resort. Over the course of the following years, the family rented accommodation at the *Seehof* every summer. After the premature death of Hans Loewenfeld's father, in Pörschach in 1886 his mother Gabriele Loewenfeld married Dr. Viktor Russ, a member of the Reichstag. The children from her first marriage now assumed the family name Loewenfeld-Russ.

In 1890 the family acquired the *Seehof* and started to renovate the building. In addition a park was laid out, a boathouse built and the gardener's house extended. The lady of the house, Gabriele Russ, was the driving force behind the alteration work and the reconfiguration of the new property. It was also she who had *Villa Mignon* built in 1912, so that it could later be sold to her nephew Felix Mayer. At that point the total size of the plot was 25,000 square metres. For Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, who was born in 1873, the *Seehof* was above all associated with family memories:

"*Villa Seehof* had served my grandmother, my parents and my family and me as a summer residence for all of 50 years. In Velden I spent the carefree holidays of my youth, then I vacationed there with my wife and children, and in later years I very often stayed on for months after the end of the summer."²

During the First World War, Hans Loewenfeld-Russ worked as a Ministerialrat (deputy director) in the Office for Nutrition of the People. When the First Republic was proclaimed, Karl Renner promoted him to Secretary of State for Feeding the People (1918 – 1920), with very much the same agenda. Despite virulent anti-Semitic and personal attacks against him in the Carinthian press, Hans Loewenfeld-Russ fought for Carinthian interests, particularly in view of the then forthcoming referendum. In spring 1920 he implemented a number of measures to provide Carinthia "before the referendum campaign, with the foodstuffs that were needed, difficult as this was at the time, in view of the general food shortages".³ In 1921 the Carinthian Homeland Service awarded him a Diploma of Gratitude and Recognition for his help with preparations for the referendum. The diploma was destroyed in 1938 during the November pogrom. In his last will and testament, dated 4th January 1944 Loewenfeld-Russ made reference to the destruction of this certificate:

"Scarcely twenty years later, in November 1938, a gang of frenzied men, led by Unterwelz, the Velden teacher, like vandals devastated and destroyed our country estate in Velden. It had been in my family for over half a century. They also tore up my honorary certificate from the Carinthian Homeland Service; I had had it framed behind glass and it used to hang in my room."⁴

Finally he left instructions in his will for the certificate to be returned in its mutilated condition to the Carinthian Provincial Government after his death, "to document the way in which the Province of Carinthia rewards services rendered to it".⁵

After being dismissed as a Minister, Loewenfeld-Russ was active in the private sector. In spring 1938 he retired from professional life and proposed moving to Velden, as his permanent place of residence.

Under the Nuremberg Racial Laws, Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, whose family had converted to Christianity as early as the 19th century, became a “Jew”. His “Gauakt” (personal file held by the Nazi regional administration) created in October 1938 describes the former Minister as a person “of Jewish kinship, slim, medium-height, with facial features indicating that he is of mixed race”.⁶

Since 1923 Hans Loewenfeld-Russ had been the legal owner of the *Seehof*. He still maintained his social contacts with Austria’s leading politicians, who also visited him in Velden on a regular basis. Anticipating forthcoming events, in December 1937, he transferred the villa to his two married daughters Maria Guttmayer and Gabriele Illing. Drawn up in April 1938, the deed of transfer was however disregarded by the National Socialists as mere camouflage and the premises were kept under special surveillance because they were “completely Jewish”. In May 1938 all the boat houses and bathing huts along the lake shore were confiscated and sealed at the instigation of Villach District Authority.⁷ With the November pogrom there came massive destruction, and its extent “could be clearly seen by every Spa guest in a passing boat” – for the lake shore was littered with pieces of broken porcelain and other objects that had been thrown into the water.⁸

Strictly speaking, even the National Socialists’ legal position was that the villa was no longer a “Jewish property”. So Maria Guttmayer and Gabriele Illing demanded from the Carinthian Gauleitung (leadership) compensation for the damage it had suffered, to the tune of 70,000 Reichsmarks.⁹ Three years later the Gauleitung finally refused to pay, because in their opinion the injured parties were of “first-degree mixed-race”; and moreover their husbands had performed no services for the NSDAP.¹⁰ At the same time the family was urged to dispose of their estate, because the NSDAP was interested in this beautiful lakeside property. The District and Local Group leaders made it perfectly clear that *Villa Seehof* was still “Jewish property”, despite the deed of transfer, and that, by whatever means necessary, it had to “come into Aryan hands”, so that Velden could “become completely free of Jews as soon as possible”.¹¹

In the face of increasingly aggressive threats, the family finally found themselves forced to sell the estate at far below its real value. With the purchase contract concluded, in 1942 the property was transferred to Reich-German Spa guests, Emma and Wilhelm Bliesterfeld. The restitution proceedings initiated in 1947 eventually resulted in Maria Guttmayer buying back the property. She subsequently sold the *Seehof* to the Austrian Federation of Trades Unions, which had a rest home for its members constructed on the site.

On 18th April 1945 Hans Loewenfeld-Russ died, after a long illness, at the house of his sons-in-law in Lainz. Since Jews were no longer allowed to be buried in Christian cemeteries, Loewenfeld-Russ had prepared a testamentary provision at the end of January 1944, according to which his corpse was “under no circumstances to be buried in a Jewish or other graveyard”.¹² For him the only possible place to be buried was in the Viennese family vault. So, on a temporary basis, his wife had Loewenfeld-Russ buried in their own garden. Eventually on 19th July 1945 Loewenfeld-Russ was buried in the family vault at Vienna Central Cemetery.

¹ On the history of the Seehof in Velden am Wörthersee, see Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, *Erinnerungen an den Seehof in Velden (1884–1939)*, in: *Aus dem Notizbuche meines Lebens*, Vienna 1943. ÖStA, AVA, E/1702, K. 13-21.

² Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, *Erinnerungen an den Seehof in Velden (1884–1939)*.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Last will and testament of Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, Vienna, 4th Jan 1944. Cited in Renate Gross, *Hans Loewenfeld-Russ. Ein österreichischer Beamter*, Phil. diploma thesis, Vienna 2005, p. 157.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ Renate Gross, *Hans Loewenfeld-Russ*, p. 155.

⁷ Alexander Verdnik, "Arisierung" in Kärnten. Die Enteignung des jüdischen Besitzes 1938–1945, Phil. doctoral thesis, Graz 2013, pp. 159 f.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Gabriele Illing and Maria Luise Guttmayer, Description of the facts, to the NSDAP Carinthian Gau leadership; Vienna, 17th Nov 1938. KLA, AKL, Dep. 06a/Property Administration, C-23.3, Sch. 23 (Ransacking of the Seehof country estate).

¹⁰ NSDAP Gau leadership Carinthia, to the Carinthian Reich Governor, Klagenfurt, 15th Sept 1941. KLA, AKL, Dep. 06a/Property Administration, C-23.3, Sch. 23 (Ransacking of the Seehof country estate).

¹¹ Alexander Verdnik, "Arisierung" in Kärnten, p. 160.

¹² Cited in Renate Gross, *Hans Loewenfeld-Russ*, p. 179.

Felix Mayer was born into a Jewish retailing family in Vienna in 1875. When he was fifteen he spent his first summer vacation in Velden, staying with his aunt at the *Seehof*. During his time at university in Prague he joined the student club “Lese- und Redehalle der deutschen Studenten” (“German Students’ Speaking Chamber and Reading Room”) and was eventually elected its president. When his father told him about his family’s Jewish roots, he took it badly, and reacted by resigning his presidency of the university club.

In 1905, not long after finishing his studies, Dr. Felix Mayer was taken on by Carl Riekh in his footwear and leather goods manufacturing business. Two years later Mayer married Riekh’s daughter, Annie in Graz. The couple had four children: Christa, who later kept a family chronicle¹, was born in 1908 and she was followed by Peter (1909), Hans (1910) and Friedrich (1915).

In the summer of 1916 this substantial family rented accommodation at *Villa Mignon* in Velden, where the older children enjoyed their first swimming lessons. They played with Maria and Gabriele, Hans Loewenfeld–Russ’s daughters, who lived next door. In 1917 Felix Mayer acquired *Villa Mignon* from his aunt Gabriele Russ (Hans Loewenfeld-Russ’s mother). During the First World War, Felix Mayer was professionally responsible for developing the family firm’s dealings with the military. Merging the previously separate footwear and leather goods manufacturing businesses, he was able to set up *Heeresausrüstungs AG (Army Outfitters)*. After the First World War, it was re-branded as *Humanic Leder und Schuh AG (Humanic Leather and Footwear Company)*.

In December 1918 fate struck the family a heavy blow: mother-of-four Annie Mayer-Riekh contracted Spanish flu and died. Two years later Felix Mayer married the twenty-six year old Elisabeth Heinisch and in 1921 twins Annie and Jörg were born. To provide sufficient space for six children, *Villa Mignon* was enlarged that same year with a number of new construction projects – with several gable-rooms and a garage. Acknowledging its new look, the lakeside villa was renamed the *Giebelhaus (Gable House)*.

In 1918 Felix Mayer purchased the dilapidated Schloss Velden (Velden castle/chateau) from the municipality, in order to prevent a Yugoslavian buy-out – something the ‘municipal fathers’ feared. For this purpose Mayer set up a consortium, which comprised the municipality of Velden, as well as two other industrialists, whilst he reserved the largest share of the holdings for himself. In the process he saved the castle, which had previously housed Yugoslavian soldiers, from falling into dereliction.

The newly established *Schlosswirtschaft Velden GmbH* (castle commercial enterprise) consisted essentially of one man, namely Felix Mayer. He looked after the interests of the castle, until he pulled out at the beginning of the 1930s. It was also his idea to establish a castle cinema, which was launched at the beginning of the 1920s. Emilie Litassy of Velden took care of the box office. She too was one of the persecuted Jews; she did not survive her deportation to Theresienstadt and was put to death in 1943.

The adolescent Mayer children watched their first movie, a thriller featuring Conrad Veidt², at the recently established Castle cinema. In the summer of 1930 Veidt was the first guest at the *Giebelhaus* now that it was being rented out. In subsequent years, Federal President Wilhelm Miklas spent his summer vacation at *Giebelhaus*.

So it was that Miklas was in Velden on 25th July 1934, the date of the National Socialists' attempted coup. The insurgents sent out a special-forces unit from Vienna with instructions to capture the President, but it was thwarted and intercepted in Klagenfurt. The coup failed, but in the years that followed Miklas spent his summer breaks guarded by a massive police presence – around a hundred officers were deployed for his personal protection. Christa Mayer-Riekh recalled that after the President's departure Swastikas were found in the writing-desks³ – a sure sign that the Federal President's immediate entourage had already been infiltrated by National Socialists.

There were also fanatical National Socialists among Felix Mayer's closest confidants. "In Velden there had been people who would grovel on their bellies in front of him, yet after the 'Anschluss' none of them would any longer so much as say hello"⁴, his daughter recalled. To protect his children and the family company against further persecution, Felix Mayer made his first suicide attempt on 16th March 1938. This is what his daughter Christa recorded:

"He spent the following days in the General Hospital, under never ending Goebbels-propaganda screaming out from the loudspeakers, accompanied by the constant roaring of the German air force parading over Vienna. That was the sheer hell that I had brought him back to."⁵

Meanwhile his son Hans was trying to save the *Humanic* company from "Aryanisation". The Board of Management was stuffed with "Aryan" friends and relatives – including a few Party members. Those family members who were a particular liability transferred their shares to persons of "flawless origins", so that everything could be returned after the end of the war, without any great fuss.

In Velden the family was left in no doubt that their continued presence in the health-Spa was unwelcome. It is hardly surprising that during the November pogrom the *Giebelhaus* was a targets for the wanton, destructive rage. As early as January 1938, Felix Mayer had transferred his lakeside property to his "Aryan" wife Elisabeth, but as they so often did, the National Socialists considered this transfer a simple smokescreen designed to mask the true situation. To ensure that they disposed of the estate, the Gestapo exerted pressure on the family. Fearing arrest and with heavy heart, Elisabeth finally decided to sell the family home. In October 1940 half of the property was transferred to Leopold Körbler and the other half to husband and wife Fritz and Angela Frank. The three new owners were joint proprietors of the Viennese Bakery and Chocolate manufacturing company *Idis*. In an earlier "Aryanisation" Fritz Frank, who had been a National Socialist activist whilst the Party was still illegal, had already acquired fifty percent of the *Idis* company shares from a Jewish shareholder. Half of these "Aryanised" shares he had transferred to his wife. The operating profits from the ("Aryanised") chocolate factory were in turn used to "Aryanise" the house on Lake Wörthersee.⁶ When in 1949 Elisabeth Mayer filed for restitution of her property, her adversaries shot her claim down by pointing out that, being "Aryan", she had never been exposed to any persecution from the Nazi regime.⁷ A few months later the applicant abandoned her restitution claim, and in return she was allowed right of use over a fastidiously demarcated lake access for a period of fifteen years, as well as being granted permission to erect a bathing hut.⁸

¹ Christa Mayer-Riekh kept the family chronicle for private use until 1957. Antonia Milroy generously allowed the author of this chapter access to the unpublished, private manuscript, henceforth cited as: Christa Mayer-Riekh, History of the Mayer-Riekh Family.

² Christa Mayer-Riekh, History of the Mayer-Riekh Family, not paginated.

³ Cited in *Veldner Zeitung*, 15th Dec 1994, p.15.

⁴ Annie Corti alle Catene interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, St. Radegund, 19th Oct 2013.

⁵ Christa Mayer-Riekh, History of the Mayer-Riekh Family, not paginated.

⁶ Leopold Körbler to Villach District Authority, Vienna, 24th Aug 1945. KLA, Villach District Authority, Sch. 148.

⁷ Angela Frank, statement to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Vienna, 29th Sept 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 216/49, Sch. 46.

⁸ Settlement agreement, Vienna, 10th Feb 1950. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 216/49, Sch. 46.

**Hotel Excelsior
in Velden
A family holds its own**

130 years ago the Viennese lawyer Theodor Neustadtel (1842–1908) began large-scale land purchases on the south shore of Lake Wörthersee (Velden/Augsdorf municipal area). Over the course of several years he acquired in total a few hectares of wood- and meadow-land as well as lakeside plots with a shore-frontage of about a kilometre. On this terrain, over the years that followed, he had several villas built: the *Anna* (today: *Cap Wörth*, Austrian Federation of Trades Unions) and the *Neustadtel* (today: *Villa Augsdorf*), *Villa Miralago* and *Villa Excelsior* (demolished in 1976).¹

It was not just Lake Wörthersee's beautiful landscapes that had appealed to Neustadtel; he also recognised the area's economic potential for the tourist trade that was just getting off the ground. Right from the start what was distinctive about his building activity was that it went far beyond the vision of an ambitious bourgeois family; rather he planned the development of a major tourism facility, along the lines of the then popular villa-hotel complexes. He was, then, one of the late-19th century tourism pioneers, who took advantage of the expansion of the railways and of the access to faraway regions that they opened up.² So in 1899, together with well known politicians, such as Count Ladislaus Aichelburg and Lieutenant Field Marshal Latterer von Lintenburg as well as the architect Ludwig Tischler he founded the *Hotel und Bad "Cap Wörth" (Hotel and Bathing)* cooperative association. Its purpose was the creation of a luxury hotel. The focus of this new business was to be the *Villa Excelsior*, erected on a rocky promontory overlooking the lake, with adjacent bathing areas. Despite the participation of celebrities from the worlds of politics and business, Neustadtel was only able to bring his hotel project to partial realisation.

"VILLA ANNA, A DELIGHTFUL BUILDING"

As early as 1892, Theodor Neustadtel began his first construction project, namely a villa at Cap Wörth to be known as *Villa Anna*, after his wife. Anna Popper (1854–1940) was the daughter of the well known spirits producer Adolf Popper and she and Theodor had married twenty years previously in Plzeň (Pilsen), on 9th May 1872. At that time, Neustadtel was considered a very promising Jewish jurist in Vienna. In November 1870 he had already been appointed junior court examiner (trainee lawyer) at the Higher Regional Court in Lower-Austria³. He came from a long line of merchants in Mladá Boleslav (Jungbunzlau), with a family that had branches across the whole of Bohemia. The Neustadtel marriage produced five children, Arthur (1873–1943), Martha (1874–1943), Louise (1879–1946), Walter (1881–1914) and Ernst (1895–1942).

From the 1880s the family spent their summers in Velden am Wörthersee – at first in rented accommodation and later in their own villas. In 1894 the author Rudolf Waizer described *Villa Anna* in these words:

"(...) a delightful building, consisting of 17 rooms endowed with every comfort, servants' quarters and three completely furnished kitchens. Attached to the villa is its own lovely park with shaded footpaths, sports areas and lawn tennis courts as well as a promenade and a large attractive boating and bathing house on the lake. The property can even boast its own steamboat station as well as landing-jetties for keel boats and sailing dinghies; it all belongs

to Dr. Th. Neustadtel, an advocate in the Supreme Court, and resident in the first district of Vienna at Petersplatz 10. On account of the villa's location and because its full modern conveniences adapted to all needs, the property may justifiably be considered one of the most beautiful on Lake Wörthersee."⁴

At this point in time, there were eighty-two houses and villas in Velden and roughly thirty-eight percent of them were owned by non-locals. Half of these belonged to people from Vienna.⁵ At the end of May or beginning of June, Anna Neustadtel used to move to Velden with her children and the domestic servants in order to manage the business during the summer season, until September or October. Usually Theodor Neustadtel joined his family in July and August, for shorter periods of time.

The guests came primarily from Vienna and Budapest. According to the health Spa registers, around the turn of the century, Lake Wörthersee enjoyed particular popularity amongst Hungarian tourists.

Most of the guests were factory owners, senior civil servants and aristocrats with their families. Apart from Neustadtel family relatives, amongst the regular guests of long-standing were industrialists Karl Duschnitz and Ernö Strasser. Like many who shared their elevated social status, these latter went on holiday with their whole household, that is, with the cook, the house-maid, the nanny as well as the other servants. Families who together with their entourage numbered six, eight or ten people were not at all unusual. They mostly stayed for several weeks or even months. The summer residence became a social meeting place, where friendships and business deals were sealed, and match-making took place.⁶ Tennis courts, cycling tours and boat trips, concerts and dances, all served for entertainment and for making new acquaintances; or one simply met when swimming.

"NEUSTADTEL, MIRALAGO, EXCELSIOR"

Between 1895 and 1905 Theodor Neustadtel was able to add three more villas to his business interests. From then on family members alternated between living in one or other of the various newly built houses. First in 1895 came *Villa Neustadtel*, which was built in archaic style, with eight rooms and adjoining closets. In feel and size it represented a more informal variation on *Villa Anna* and large families could rent out the whole building. From summer 1902 *Villa Miralago* was also available – an Italian-style villa, built on an artificial embankment, right on the waterfront. With eighteen rooms on three floors, it provided an exclusive holiday experience for further guests. In 1905 the *Villa Excelsior* was finally completed, and with it the business was enlarged by twenty-one rooms, with columned terraces on three floors. Up until this time the whole complex was managed by Anna Neustadtel.

The guest list indicates well-heeled clients; yet, according to the records that have been preserved, occupancy rates can only be deemed average. Business development had been financed on the one hand by Theodor Neustadtel and his law office, and on the other by partners from the *Hotel und Bad "Cap Wörth"* cooperative association. Building the *Villa Excelsior*, which lorded it so impressively over the lake, had required substantial blasting operations and these had exceeded Neustadtel's financial means. On top of this was his unstable lifestyle, involving many female acquaintances in Vienna, whilst his family remained in Velden. Financial ruin in 1906 was followed by his death in 1908, at the age of sixty-six. The task of rescuing the business now passed to daughter Louise Neustadt, then thirty years old. Up to this point, she had helped her mother at the villas every summer; from 1895

she had also attended lectures on history and literature, presented (for example) at the “Verein zur Abhaltung akademischer Vorträge für Damen” (“union for academic lectures for ladies”) by Alfred Prizbram. As preparation for her new work as hotel manageress, in the winter of 1905-6 she completed six months’ training with Anna Sacher in Vienna. The summer season of 1906 was the first under her leadership. She reorganised the business and for the time being named the whole complex *Pension Excelsior*. In the years that followed, the villas were rebuilt and converted for modern hotel operation; this involved such initiatives as installing a private water supply to provide running water in every room, the electrification of the houses and the addition of restaurants and boathouses. And her efforts were met with success; the number of guests increased significantly. Apart from the regulars, such as the Duschnitz family, the families of Siegmund Hertzberg-Fränk, August Lederer and Count Széchenyi could also be found amongst the guest-lists.

Financial consolidation proceeded in several stages. In the first instance the *Steiermärkische Sparkassa* (bank) in Graz took over the entire property and entrusted Louise Neustadt with its management and modernisation. However, to pay off part of the debt, *Villa Anna* had to be sold, together with most of the land, including almost a kilometre of lakeside frontage.

The purchaser was Anna Filli from Klagenfurt. In 1922 her heirs sold the villa, together with the land to Prince Livio Borghese.⁷

Villa Miralago was first bought by the industrialist Leopold Stein, Louise Neustadt’s uncle. Just a year later it was bought back by *Steiermärkische Sparkassa* and reintegrated into the business. With notable assistance from Stein, Louise Neustadt needed only five years before being able to buy the business back from *Steiermärkischen Sparkassa* and to run it once more as a family concern.⁸ Having repurchased the business, Louise Neustadt then enhanced it; for example she had *Villa Miralago* fitted with wooden balconies and the *Excelsior* with new terraces. The guest lists up until the First World War reflect an economic upturn. Prominent Jewish families were among their guests, such as the Thorsches, Doctors and Schapringers, but so too were artists, such as Arnold Rosé and the journalist Alice Schmutzer.

At the end of each season Louise Neustadt moved back to Vienna. From 1909 she studied as a “hospitant” (“guest student”) in the Law Faculty at Vienna University. At the end of 1913 she travelled to London and married Otto Hecht, a lawyer. At first they kept their marriage secret, only allowing it to become public knowledge in the spring of 1918. From 1918 Louise Neustadt was using the double-barrelled name “Hecht-Neustadt”, but this was only officially approved by the Carinthian Provincial Government ten years later. In 1914 fate struck Louise Neustadt with two heavy blows: from May of that year her brother Walter Neustadt was recorded as “missing”. He was a lieutenant in the Imperial and Royal Army stationed near the Albanian border.⁹ And on 1st August all the guests left the hotel, because of the outbreak of war.

Until 1918 the hotel represented an immense financial burden. Once Italy entered the War, the authorities declared most of Carinthia a war zone, where no tourism was allowed. This policy was also continued in 1916 and 1917. But still taxes had to be paid and maintenance costs met. Only in 1918 did the situation begin gradually to improve. A surviving guest book provides evidence of at least limited tourism from August of that year.

At the end of the War the *Excelsior* found itself in an area claimed by the SHS State (Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, established in December 1918). The demarcation line with Austria ran right through Velden. Since going back and forth across the new border

was difficult, in the summers of 1919/20 Louise Hecht-Neustadtl decided that for the time being at least she would live only in Velden with her family.

The integration of the tourist industry into the new administrative and economic set-up of the SHS State is highlighted by the fact that, among other things, tax returns and declarations of assets for 1919/20 had to be written in the Slovenian language. After the demarcation line was definitively abolished on 6th August 1920, Louise Neustadtl once more had her property completely at her own disposal. The members of the Plebiscite Committee occasionally stayed at *Villa Miralago*. Prince Livio Borghese, who purchased *Villa Cap Wörth* only a few years later, could well have been amongst them.¹⁰ Louise Hecht-Neustadtl succeeded in continuing to run the hotel, despite the changed political situation and the problems connected with it.

Even after the referendum, tourism still had to contend with huge problems, most notably food shortages. Leading Velden entrepreneurs therefore decided to establish *Wörth GmbH zur Beschaffung ausländischer Lebensmittel für die Kärntner Kurorte*, (a company “for providing the Carinthian Spa towns with food from other countries”). The first meeting took place at the *Excelsior* on 15th November 1920, with Gottfried Engstler, Christoph Mösslacher and Louise Hecht-Neustadtl present. Anton Bulfon, Otto Moro, Anton Wrann were also members of the extended committee. Louise’s younger brother Ernst Neustadtl, who in the 1920s leased the *Pension Pundschu*, served as secretary. Within a few weeks, businesses from across Carinthia joined in this undertaking, and in total it proved possible to raise capital of more than a million Kronen. Most of the business people applied for share allocations worth between 10,000 and 20,000 Kronen, whilst only three invested an amount of 100,000 Kronen: Mösslacher, *Schlosshotel Velden GmbH (Castle Hotel)* and Hecht-Neustadtl. The first Annual General Meeting took place in Klagenfurt on 30th January 1921. Ernst Neustadtl was one of the five managing directors, and Louise Hecht-Neustadtl was one of the twelve supervisory board members - and the only woman member. To effect an immediate improvement in her own supply situation, in 1921 she and her husband bought the Sima farm in Schiefing from a Carinthian Slovene who had emigrated to Yugoslavia. Amongst its other uses, the purpose of the farm was to supply food to the hotel. Louise Hecht-Neustadtl’s dedication to tourism in Velden is also highlighted by her work for the Spa Commission. On 26th March 1923 Gottfried Engstler wrote to her, referring to the Commission elections:

“Madam, as you are probably already aware, you received the most votes at the election for the Spa Commission (7 more than the next candidate). Yet you still fell short, because, on account of a typist’s oversight, a number of ballot cards listed ‘Mr. H’. In consequence your husband received over a third of your votes, so that both parties seemed to be elected only as replacement members. However two gentlemen amongst those elected as full members at once resigned from their posts so that you, dear madam, appeared as duly elected; life is full of funny coincidences!”

Engstler’s letters in the years 1923/24 give an insight into the work of the Spa Commission. Yet they also show that the Commission repeatedly exploited Neustadtl’s social contacts in Vienna, for example securing one of Ella Zirner-Zwieback’s fashion shows for Velden, or links with the *Wiener Verkehrsbüro* (Viennese Transport Office). Thanks to Louise Hecht-Neustadtl’s exceptionally dedicated and successful management of the *Excelsior* hotel, it rose to become one of the leading hotels on Lake Wörthersee in the 1920s and the 1930s.

The establishment accommodated numerous prominent guests from both home and abroad. Business success was also highlighted by the expansion of the premises, which resulted in a new building, *Villa 4* consisting of twenty-three rooms, being constructed behind *Villa Excelsior*.

During building work in 1924, Louise Hecht-Neustadtl also had a new diving platform built. In the same year she proposed establishing a golf club in Velden, under the auspices of the Spa Commission. There were negotiations with Richard Stern, president of the Vienna Golf Club, but they failed because the costs were too high. Nevertheless, in 1927 the *Excelsior* was one of the sponsors of the first Carinthian golf club, in Dellach only ten minutes from the hotel by car.

After further building work and extensions, by 1929 the *Excelsior* had eighty rooms and was one of the biggest and most elegant hotels in Velden. The hotel offered guests their own on-tap mountain-spring water supply, box-garages for cars, a hotel automobile, tennis courts and a croquet lawn with coaching staff, a children's playground, rhythmic gymnastics, a bar and dance hall, rowing boats, a swimming coach, bathing cabins, milk for the children from the home farm and much more.¹¹ One of the swimming coaches was Zsigo Wertheimer, who led the swimming section of Hakoah (the Viennese Jewish sports club) to international success during the inter-war years. At the time, the hotel had about forty employees. Among the guests were the authors Alfred Polgar and Alexander Roda-Roda, as well as the industrialist Oskar Trebitsch. But there were also guests from Great Britain and Egypt, such as the Minister Youssef Soliman Pascha.

The German "One Thousand Mark" blockade against Austria from 27th May 1933 did long-term damage to the *Excelsior's* economic health. A further major setback was the bomb attack launched against the hotel on 9th July 1934 by Carinthian National Socialists.¹² Only about 5,000 Schillings' worth of damage was done, but the guests who left the hotel and the cancellations in the aftermath of the attack ultimately represented appreciable losses.¹³

Louise Hecht-Neustadtl oversaw the necessary repairs and tried to continue with business as usual, despite the changed political circumstances. So, for example, on 26th July 1937 she organised the Carinthian Bauernball (country ball); amongst the prominent participants were Federal President Wilhelm Miklas and his wife Leopoldine, the Carinthian Provincial Governor Arnold Sucher and other celebrities such as the Brazilian Ambassador to Brussels, Carlos Martins Pereira e Souza, the Vienna business man Robert Gerngross and the English ship owner Leslie Runciman of Doxford.¹⁴ In August 1937 Prince Eugen of Sweden was also a guest at the *Excelsior*.

"ARYANISATION"

After the "Anschluss" in March 1938 Louise Hecht-Neustadtl was no longer permitted to set foot in her hotel. Her substitute as provisional manager was Alexander Huber, who was appointed by the National Socialist Property Transactions Office in Klagenfurt. However the provisional manager paid no contributions to *Kärntner Landeskrankenkasse* (Provincial Health Insurance Fund), and on account of the relatively modest arrears of 11,677 Reichsmarks, foreclosure proceedings against the hotel were initiated in August 1938. The principle creditor, the *Kärntner Landeshypotheken Bank*, was the only bidder at the foreclosure sale held on 14th February 1939 and it successfully purchased the hotel at auction for 293,151 Reichsmarks.

Two months later Standartenführer (full Colonel) Erhard Brunner, who had already evinced an interest in the hotel before the auction, acquired it from *Landeshypotheken Bank*, at a

price of 320,000 Reichsmarks, a mere fraction of its actual value. He had in fact already arranged stand-by credit of 500,000 Reichsmarks for the transaction from *Golddiskontbank Berlin* and *Volksbank Altenheim* (banks).¹⁵ Erhard Brunner and his family lived at the hotel and he managed it with moderate success until 1945. Both the hotel and the farm suffered many privations. Moreover, as the war was ending, the local population looted part of the inventory. Only after the British military had “occupied” the hotel could what remained be secured.¹⁶

In March 1939 Louise Hecht-Neustadt and her husband were able to flee to London, where their son Walter (1919–1972) had already been living since the previous summer. At the same time, Louise’s brother Arthur Neustadt moved from Reichenberg to Prague with their mother Anna, by then over eighty years old. Anna Neustadt died in Prague on 7th August 1940; Arthur Neustadt was deported to Theresienstadt on 17th December 1941, and on 18th December 1943 he was sent from there to Auschwitz; Martha Fröschels, née Neustadt fled from Vienna to Prague, from where she was deported to Theresienstadt on 9th July 1942 and on 15th December 1943 she was sent to Auschwitz. Ernst Neustadt likewise fled from Vienna to Prague, from where he was deported to Theresienstadt on 17th December 1941 and on 1st April 1942 was sent to Piaski. All of Louise Hecht-Neustadt’s siblings were murdered during the Shoah.¹⁷ Arthur Neustadt’s two children succeeded in fleeing to Columbia; Ernst Neustadt’s wife and daughter were able to flee to Great Britain.

POST-WAR PERIOD

In August 1946 Louise Hecht-Neustadt and her family returned to Vienna from their English exile. In October 1946 she managed to have herself appointed as public administrator of the *Excelsior* by the authorities in Villach. In summer 1947 she re-opened the hotel. That year the *Excelsior* was the only Carinthian hotel to be included in the so-called “foreigner campaign” launched by the Office for Reconstruction of Austrian Tourism. In selected hotels holiday makers from abroad had to pay part of their bill in the foreign currencies so urgently needed by the Republic of Austria. As one of twenty participating hotels, the *Excelsior* generated as much as a fifth of the foreign currency earned in total. At the same time the family made efforts to gain restitution of their property. However, the lawsuit against the National Socialist provisional manager, Brunner, who was at first still interned in Wolfsberg de-Nazification camp, and against the banks involved in the “Aryanisation”, was protracted over several years, lasting until spring 1951.¹⁸ A proper reconstruction of the hotel was prevented by Louise Hecht-Neustadt’s sudden death from pneumonia, in December 1947, and it was planned that the hotel would be closed during the 1948 season. As early as 16th April 1948, the Carinthia Provincial Tourist Association reacted to this proposal by issuing an undisguised threat:

“We have been informed by reliable sources, that this year you do not intend to open ‘Hotel Excelsior’, your tourist accommodation establishment on Lake Wörthersee. (...) Should you persist with this plan, we will contact the British occupying forces and request them to commandeer your business for occupation purposes, thereby freeing up another establishment on Lake Wörthersee. The Provincial Tourist Association expects to be informed by 30th April 1948 at the latest, whether or not you are ready to open your business this year. If we do not receive a reply from you by this deadline, we shall assume that you remain firm in your current intentions. In that case the Provincial Tourist Association will proceed in such a way as best serves the promotion of tourism in the Province of Carinthia.”

This threat of a new expropriation was countered by the family, who made their own representations to the British military authorities. The family's success was due not least to the fact that Louise Hecht-Neustadtl's son Walter had been a British soldier for six years. In March 1949 General John Winterton, subsequently British High Commissioner, wrote to Ernst Kolb, Federal Minister for Trade and Reconstruction, stating that the *Excelsior* hotel would not be commandeered by the British military. During the same month and with explicit reference to the *Excelsior* hotel, the Carinthian Provincial Parliament debated the British military's wrongful confiscations policy.¹⁹

From 1949 to 1961 the hotel was co-managed by the family and *Österreichische Verkehrsbüro* (Austrian Transport Office), with the Transport Office responsible for the operational side of the business.

Yet in 1961 the family once more assumed sole responsibility for the hotel. One night at the end of February 1969, an act of vandalism wrought havoc on the principal buildings of the hotel (*Villa Excelsior* and *Villa 4*) which sustained severe damage. Doors were broken open and in the order of forty-four rooms were ransacked: all the mattresses, pillows and bed covers were slashed with razors; the curtains were cut down; the wallpaper ripped off and cut up; the lamps were shattered and their fittings torn from the wall; porcelain and glassware were smashed; most of the furniture was destroyed and thrown down the stairs, and large quantities of human faeces were left on the dining room floor. According to the police report a group of adolescents from the *Cap Wörth* Trades Union Home were the chief suspects, but the culprits were never caught. The hotel was not insured against vandalism. Since the family could not make good the damage suffered, they decided to sell the vandalised buildings.

In the midst of sales negotiations, the owner Walter Hecht died in 1972. His widow Gertrude Hecht tried to rescue the business, throwing all her energy into selling off the vandalised parts as planned. However, potential buyers were faced with such stringent purchase constraints from the municipality of Velden, that nobody was willing to conclude a sale. Since the business could not be restored to its previous running order, in 1975 the local banks called in their loans and a compulsory sale looked inevitable. For the family this would have been the equivalent of another expropriation. Local surveyors were commissioned to assess the value of the property and, according to them, it was now worth half of what it had been in 1972.

It was thanks to Gertrude Hecht's tireless commitment that finally in January 1976 a Dutch businessman purchased part of the business (*Villa Excelsior* and *Villa 4*), a few days prior to the scheduled compulsory purchase auction. For the time being the villas *Augsdorf* and *Miralago* remained in the family and it proved possible to pay off the debts. Yet because of the financial damage that had already been sustained, between 1976 and 1981 other parts of the business needed to be sold off.

The residual portion was thoroughly modernised and is still run by the family to this day. Despite all the resistance and hardships, the Neustadtl-Hecht family, with Hotel *Excelsior*, has been able to hold its own on Lake Wörthersee over the course of four generations.

¹ All documentary sources that are not otherwise indicated are from the privately owned Hecht-Neustadtl estate in Vienna. In family records, variant spellings of the name *Neustadtl* are documented. According to his 1881 Viennese certificate of origin, Theodor bore the name *Neustadtel*,

the same as his son Arthur. His daughters Martha and Louise, as well as his sons Walter and Ernst, used the spelling *Neustadtl*.

² On the significance of the Südbahn line for tourism, see Gerhard Artl (editor), *Mit Volldampf in den Süden. 150 Jahre Südbahn Wien – Triest*, Vienna 2007.

³ *Tages-Presse*, 22nd Nov 1870, supplement, p. 5.

⁴ Rudolf Waizer, *Städte, Bilder und Landschaften aus aller Welt*, No 52, Linz 1894, p.39. Cited in Johann Viertler, *Prinz Livio Borghese und seine Beziehung zu „Cap Wörth“ bei Velden am Wörthersee*, in: *Carinthia I*, 185 (1995), pp. 549-555, here: p. 555.

⁵ See *Führer durch das Curbad Velden am Wörthersee und dessen Umgebung*, published by Verschönerungsverein Velden, Linz 1896.

⁶ Jill Steward, *The Spa Towns of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Growth of Tourist Culture: 1860–1914*, in: Peter Borsay/Gunther Hirschfelder/Ruth Mohrmann (editors), *New Directions in Urban History. Aspects of European Art, Health, Tourism and Leisure since the Enlightenment*, Münster–New York–Munich–Berlin 2000, pp.87-125, here: pp. 108-113.

⁷ Johann Viertler, *Prinz Livio Borghese und seine Beziehung zu „Cap Wörth“ bei Velden am Wörthersee*, pp. 551-553.

⁸ Villach Land Register. Neustadtl estate, private ownership.

⁹ ÖStA, KA, Qualification List, Kt. 2230, Walter Neustadtl.

¹⁰ See Claudia Fräss-Ehrfeld, *Geschichte Kärntens*, vol 3/2: *Abwehrkampf – Volksabstimmung – Identitätssuche*, Klagenfurt 2000, pp. 174 ff., 186 and 188 ff.

¹¹ Erwin Stein (editor), *Die Städte Deutschösterreichs*, vol IV: Klagenfurt, Berlin 1929, p. 423.

¹² *Rot-Weiss-Rot-Buch. Gerechtigkeit für Österreich! Darstellungen, Dokumente und Nachweise zur Vorgeschichte und Geschichte der Okkupation Österreichs. Erster Teil nach amtlichen Quellen*, published by the Austrian Federal Government, Vienna 1946, p. 39.

¹³ Louise Hecht-Neustadtl, Letter to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Vienna, 14th April 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 2/47.

¹⁴ *Neues Wiener Journal*, 27th July 1937, p. 4.

¹⁵ Louise Hecht-Neustadtl, Letter to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Vienna, 14th April 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 2/47. See also August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich*, Klagenfurt 1987, pp. 191 f.

¹⁶ Otto Hecht, Letter to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Vienna, 1st Sept 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 2/47.

¹⁷ Database of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

¹⁸ Austrian Federal Financial Agency Vienna, letter to the Restitution Commission, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Vienna, 7th Feb 1951. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 2/47.

¹⁹ *Die Neue Zeit*, 15th March 1949, p. 2.

Werner Koroschitz

“...where a means
of living could
be found”

Expulsion and escape

NATIONAL SOCIALIST EXPULSION POLICY

Nazi propaganda about “privileged emigrants”, who lived a contented life abroad, did not fail to make an impact. Even after the War in the collective consciousness of Austrians, the refugees largely remained those “stateless journeymen” (in Goebbels’ phrase), who had lived it up overseas, whilst at home people had to endure the Allies’ “terror bombing”. To this day the terminology remains problematic. For example, Jews who were forced to leave Austria from March 1938 onwards are still referred to as “emigrants” or “expatriates”, which suggests a freedom of action that they never really enjoyed. The “expelled” and the “banished” is how Bertolt Brecht referred to fellow sufferers, who had fled Nazi Germany and gone into exile, just as he had:

“I always thought the name they stuck on us rang false:
emigrants.

It means people who leave and settle in another country. But we didn’t go abroad of our own accord, or choose some other country. Neither did we enter another country intending if possible to stay there, forever.

But we fled. We were expelled, banished.

And no home, but a place of exile - that was what the country that took us in amounted to.”¹

Hardly any of the persecuted fled and chose another country freely. They accepted whatever was on offer. Atlases were pulled down from book shelves to locate each country with an exotic sounding name that offered a hope of safety. Jewish people had to wait for entry permits to states that they had previously hardly heard of, such as Uruguay, Venezuela, Barbados, Cuba or Shanghai; they were usually destitute and demoralised by harassment and government agency procedures that were themselves often extremely hazardous.

Or – like Villach solicitor Marcell Glesinger - they just hoped to be able to emigrate to a country “where a means of living could be found”.² Similarly, the Velden dentist Heinrich Hirsch aspired modestly to emigrate to somewhere where he would be able to give his family “their daily bread”.³ Marcell Glesinger finally fled to the Middle East (Palestine), and Heinrich Hirsch eventually ended up in the Far East (Shanghai), via the overland route.

At the beginning of her novel “Shanghai fern von wo”, (“Shanghai far from where”) Ursula Krechel relates a conversation between two emigrants. When Shanghai is named as the refugees’ destination, one emigrant disconcertedly asks “What? So far?”. His interlocutor responds with the ambiguous question: “Far from where?”⁴

OSKAR SALTER: TEN YEARS IN SHANGHAI

According to the *Verzeichnis der Israeliten in Kärnten* (Register of Israelites in Carinthia), Oskar Salter, who was born in Vienna in 1892, lived temporarily in Villach after the First World War. At the time his sisters Olga and Helene were still living in the city too. Helene was married to Oskar Neumann from Trieste, who was employed from 1918 to 1921 by the Villach branch of the forwarding agency Schenker & Co.⁵

Oskar Salter himself returned to Vienna, precisely when is unknown. There he worked as an accountant for *Mercedes Benz* and later for *Schenker & Co*. He lost his job some time in March 1938, just after the “Anschluss”. During the summer of the same year he made up his mind and fled to Shanghai, where he arrived in January 1939.⁶ For the following ten years he lived in a welfare home run by the Jewish community in Hongkew. On 18th May 1949 he left Shanghai and headed for Toronto. After two years in Canada, he emigrated to New York where he lived in humble circumstances until his death.⁷

As in other parts of Austria, Jewish people in the Villach region at first reacted to the National Socialist policies of exclusion and deprivation of rights with disbelief. They hoped for a quick end to the nightmare and accordingly adopted a “wait-and-see” attitude. The self-restraint initially shown by the majority of the Jewish population was based above all on their faith in the rule of law in a civilised society. Their belief in constitutional and ethical principles often went hand in hand with the simple assumption that the terror would soon subside. So, immediately after the “Anschluss”, only a few fled to other countries.

Regina Spierer remembers that many Carinthian Jews were led to believe that “it won’t be that bad”. Doubts and concerns soon changed to fear, in the face of the massive violence. All remaining hope faded over the course of 1938 and “everyone just wanted to get out”.⁸ Even in March 1938 many still hoped that the Nazi regime would not last long, or at least, that there would be abatement in the level of anti-Jewish activities. Understandably they weighed up the pros and cons of an uncertain future as emigrants and those of staying in their homeland. As long as there was the illusion that the situation in Austria would “return to normal” only very few were prepared to commit themselves to the risks and hardships of a life abroad – without material security, or family support. Regina Spierer of Klagenfurt describes the loss of her homeland:

“It was horrible what they did to us, but that they should take our country away from us - and they did take our homeland from us - cannot be forgiven. I was an Austrian, like you. The fact that I was also

Jewish, okay, that was my religion. I am [all] right but we belonged there and by rights! I was born there, I loved the country, it was my home just like anybody else’s. Take away the home, your life is over, finito. That one continues to live, that’s horrible. I had the same right to Klagenfurt as anybody else. I loved it, as anyone would; it was my home.”⁹

On 17th March 1938 Regina Spierer and husband Wolf from Villach turned their backs on Nazi Austria. Their first stop was Paris, with further stages of an onward journey to follow. In a different case, Hermann Jonas, the proprietor of *Seebacher Maschinenfabrik* (engineering works) was on holiday in France when Hitler’s troops crossed the Austrian border, cheered on by the local population. Showing wise foresight, he preferred not to return home again. Jonas ignored the National Socialists’ request that he return, sensing that this “would have been tantamount to suicide”.¹⁰

HERMANN JONAS

Hermann Jonas had been co-owner of the *Seebacher Maschinenfabrik* engineering works since 1923 and from 1930 he was sole-owner. Immediately after the "Anschluss" the factory was confiscated and placed under "provisional administration".

Jonas, who was abroad at the time, found himself compelled to sell his property to former business partner, Josef Fitzek and his associate, Franz Haber. The purchase price of 60,000 Reichsmarks was transferred to a frozen account, once the "Jewish levies" had been deducted. In September 1939 the factory was incorporated into the newly established company *Kärntner Maschinenfabriken, Egger, Fitzek, Moschner & Co.*¹¹ In 1948 Hermann Jonas, who had emigrated in the meantime to the U.S.A., filed for restitution and the case ended in an out-of-court settlement.

There was hardly any country interested in accommodating destitute Jews. Facing a swelling tide of refugees, many of Austria's neighbours closed their borders or introduced visa requirements. Although at the beginning entering Italy was still relatively unproblematic - as compared with Czechoslovakia, Hungary or Switzerland - Jews living in Carinthia scarcely gave it serious consideration.

During the first weeks after the "Anschluss" emigration still proceeded on an individual case-by-case basis. But once it had again been granted permission, in May 1938, the Israelite Community (IKG) in Vienna assumed a major coordination and mediation role. This represented a fundamental change of direction for the IKG. Until the "Anschluss" its work had been focused on religious, cultural and social matters, but now its institutional function was to organise Jewish emigration and it also became a welfare agency. Working alongside it, the Palestine Office, the Zionist National Association for Austria and various Zionist youth movements also tried to enable as many people as possible to leave the country. Procuring the necessary entry visas and foreign currency were the most pressing tasks facing these institutions.

At the local level the expulsion policy was implemented in a cold-blooded, calculating manner. The declared objective of the regional and local National Socialist authorities was to meet the demand for a "Jew free" Gau (Region) of Carinthia. Guidelines for the expulsion of the Jews had been drawn up at both Gau and Reich levels and were implemented with the utmost efficiency, in close co-operation with Municipal Administrations, Provincial Governments and District Leaderships. Leaving the country directly from Carinthia was hardly practicable, and for the impatient Nazis it would have been too longwinded a process. So the NS authorities did everything in their power to relocate those Jews remaining in Carinthia to Vienna, where the important emigration offices and aid committees were based. Since most foreign countries required a visa and the relevant embassies could only be contacted in the federal capital, moving to Vienna was in most cases a necessary condition of finding any avenue of escape at all. Besides, living in a small town where everybody knew everybody else became increasingly unbearable, because it was hardly possible to avoid routine, everyday harassment. Although even in Vienna the Jewish population still suffered at the hands of goon squads, the anonymity of the big city at least gave them a chance of avoiding personal hostility and spitefulness.

It was perhaps a modest shield against the close-meshed network of terror; but even this was taken away in September 1941 when "Police Regulations for Identification of Jews" were issued. After that date, all Jews from the age of six were obliged to wear the Star of David.

Humiliated and wearing the compulsory yellow label on his breast, so too the retired railway employee Leon Zwerling trudged the streets of Villach: with downcast eyes, as witnesses recall, and always alongside the pavement, because Jews were not even allowed to walk on the pavement itself.¹² On Gestapo orders, Leon moved to Vienna with his non-Jewish wife Anna in the middle of November 1942.¹³ Jews who were compulsorily resettled in Vienna were usually mandated to live in collective flats that were already occupied by several other Jewish families.

Before the Nazi regime switched to the systematic extinction of Jewish lives, they first aimed to “solve” the “Jewish question” through emigration.

The associated terror campaign – the phased disenfranchisement plan, expulsions, expropriation and economic ruination – was designed to prompt the Jewish population to quit the country quickly. With the establishment of the “Central Office for Jewish Emigration” in Vienna in August 1938, led by the then SS-Untersturmführer (junior SS officer) Adolf Eichmann, the expulsion of the Jews came under centralised control. The Office was accommodated in the expropriated palace of Louis Rothschild, in the fourth district of Vienna – a choice rich in symbolic meaning, because in Nazi propaganda the Rothschild family was deemed the prototype of the “Jews of international finance”.

From this point onwards approval of emigration applications had to go through the Central Office, where threats and blackmail were used to rob those willing to emigrate right down to their very last financial means of support.

All the agencies concerned with emigration were now accommodated in the palace, and people were dealt with, rather as if they were on an assembly-line. A Jewish functionary from Berlin reported:

“It’s like an automatic operation. (...) At one end, the Jew who still owns something, a shop, or a factory, or a bank account comes in. He then walks through the whole building, from counter to counter, from office to office, and when he comes out at the other end, he has been robbed of all his rights and he doesn’t possess a single penny, but what he does have is a passport stating: ‘You have 14 days within which to leave the country, otherwise you will be sent to the concentration camp’.”¹⁴

Soon such efficient Austrian deportation techniques were being extended to the whole Reich.

FRANZ NOVAK (1913–1983)

Eichmann had understood how to link the systematic expulsion of the Jews with a predatory raid on their assets, for the benefit of the German economy. As a “reward” for the meticulously implemented expulsion policy, Eichmann was later placed in charge of co-ordination and organisation of the “final solution”. At the “Central Office for Jewish Emigration” Franz Novak from Wolfsberg was also proving his worth for the first time. His organisational talents were recognised and fostered by Eichmann at this early stage. In spring 1940 Eichmann brought his subordinate and former colleague Novak to Berlin to work at Reich Security Headquarters. In his capacity as Transportation Officer at Eichmann’s newly established Department for “Jewish and Evacuation Affairs” SS-Hauptsturmführer (middle-ranking SS officer) Novak co-ordinated the deportation trains taking victims to the concentration and extermination camps. At his first trial in Vienna in 1964 he defended himself by claiming that to him Auschwitz had just been another railway station.

Provided they transferred their entire assets to the state, well-heeled Jews were now given the opportunity to enter a variety of host countries as immigrants. Five percent of the expropriated assets went to the Emigration Fund, which had been established for the specific purpose of helping finance the escape of destitute Jews. Apart from small personal effects those expelled were not allowed to take more than ten Reichsmarks with them, on leaving the country. From November 1941 at the latest, when the Eleventh Decree of the Reich Citizenship Law came into force, all of their remaining assets came into the possession of the state. All Jews who left the territory of the Reich ipso facto lost their German citizenship. Under the terms of the Decree they were therefore denaturalised and their entire property automatically passed into the possession of the German Reich. Following the emigration ban imposed in October 1941, the subsequent deportation of Jews fell within the remit of the Central Office. The assets accumulated up until 1941 to finance the emigration of impoverished Jews were now used to pay for their deportation to the extermination camps.

It was already difficult enough to find a host country, but the situation was further aggravated by the need to run a bureaucratic gauntlet. Numerous regulatory obstructions allowed the authorities to make leaving the country all the more difficult. The thorny administrative path of suffering started in the relevant local community, where the tax office had to issue a certificate stating that tax liabilities had been paid in full, which in turn had to be verified by the Currency Exchange Control Office in Vienna – in the worst case scenario it might be declared invalid. It was also essential to get confirmation that the appropriate Reich Emigration Tax had been paid. A certificate of good conduct issued by the relevant Police Department had to be enclosed with the passport application. After arriving in Vienna, accommodation had to be found, so that days and days could be spent, rushing from one office to another. The constant queuing for papers and visas could take so long that the three months' validity of the tax certificate ran out - and the whole merry-go-round had to start again. The same was true of the passports issued by the Central Office that expired when the stipulated deadline for departure could not be met. The quest for escape opportunities was a story of humiliation, fear, despair and resignation:

“Even prior to being admitted to the Central Office, all tax liabilities had to be settled; at the tax office the Reich Emigration Tax had to be paid; at the Israelite Religious Community office, the Jewish levy contribution (after the November pogrom) had to be defrayed. A list of all movable assets including an estimate for all valuables and jewellery had to be submitted, to cover which a surtax of 100% had to be discharged. All assets had to be handed over to the bank, with an irrevocable letter of attorney, which was subscribed in the trust deed, and the customs authorities and police had to provide receipts for the taxes paid. Somewhere in there, was also a dog tax, that had to be paid three months in advance; it was collected even if you didn't have a dog.”¹⁵

The 1938-November pogrom persuaded the Jews who had so far remained in Carinthia that they had to leave the country as fast as possible. The majority of the men had been arrested and deported to concentration camps during the pogrom. So, the women who were left behind were confronted with the challenge of taking the necessary preparatory steps for departure. Everyone released from the concentration camps had to report immediately to the Gestapo and provide a written undertaking to leave Carinthia by the end of the year. In the concentration camps the internees were confronted with human cruelty on an undreamt of scale. During his three months' internment at Dachau concentration camp, Klagenfurt retailer

Max Fischbach suffered not only psychological damage, but also enduring bodily harm. Whilst he was being brutally maltreated by the concentration camp guards, his wife Edith was looking after their two-year old son Paul and six-month old daughter Evelyn and was also having to handle the emigration formalities. As she proceeded, the search for host countries became increasingly complicated. As late as July 1938 the family of Klagenfurt retailers still thought they might be able to emigrate to Australia or North America¹⁶, but a few months later, in January 1939, they very much hoped that the Lesser Antilles nation of Barbados would take them.¹⁷ Eventually Max Fischbach and his family found shelter in Venezuela. There he once more met up with his brother, the Villach shopkeeper Osias Fischbach, who had also been deported to Dachau during the pogrom. Whilst he was in the camp, his wife Mina had been obliged to look on helplessly as their entire possessions were destroyed. She suffered a stroke during the pogrom and never recovered from its effects before her death. The destitute refugees did not have the financial means to seek professional medical treatment.

Trying to find that elusive escape opportunity was made all the more burdensome by the need for meticulously organised, essential paperwork and the necessity of hanging around outside official agencies all day. The danger of being maltreated or publicly humiliated by SA members or by the kids of the Hitler Youth, was omnipresent. The longer the wait for the entry permit, the more difficult leaving the country appeared to be. The days of hope and trepidation increasingly became a race with death.

The queues in front of the consulates quickly grew ever longer. The system used by the United States divided the immigrants on a quota basis, according to their national origin. This often meant waiting-times of months until another batch of visas was finally released for issue to people from a particular country. On top of that, applicants also required a valid letter of sponsorship from somebody in America.

Under increasing pressure, some turned to completely unorthodox methods, as in the case of Hermann Tersch. He systematically scanned American telephone directories trying to find persons with the same surname as himself, or addresses of Jewish organisations. In the Chicago telephone directory he eventually found just one Tersch and in vain wrote a desperate letter to him, pleading to be sent an affidavit.

Surprisingly in July 1939 the Tersch family received an affidavit from Raimund Law of Chicago. He was the president of *Halsted Exchange National Bank Chicago*. In a Christian spirit of loving one's neighbour, he wanted to help a Jewish family escape from Nazi Germany. A Jewish women's organisation had presented him with a stack of requests and his selection had chanced upon Hermann Tersch's family.¹⁸ Yet Hermann Tersch's brother, Norbert, who was a qualified bookkeeper, had no such luck: at the beginning of 1940 his departure seemed to be within reach. Yet the two years of waiting had in the meantime exhausted his financial means: his ability to pay his passage was uncertain, and all the attestations and certificates that had been issued were on the brink of expiry.¹⁹ What's more the outbreak of war had significantly limited the possibility of escaping. Norbert Tersch was deported to Poland on 15th February 1941.

Stefan Zweig, who died in Brazilian exile in 1942, described what it meant to be a Jewish refugee in his autobiography *Die Welt von Gestern (The World of Yesterday)*:

"Over night I once again slid down another step. Yesterday, still a guest from abroad and a gentleman of sorts, who spent his overseas income here and paid his tax, I had now become an emigrant, a 'refugee'. [...] Moreover, each of the foreign visas on this white sheet of

paper would from now on have to be specially requested, for in every country people were suspicious about the 'sort' of human being that I suddenly was: those without rights, without a homeland who could not be moved on, or quickly sent back home, as others could be if necessary, if they became a nuisance or overstayed their welcome. [...]

All the indignities formerly invented solely for criminals were now imposed on every traveller before and during his journey. You had to let them take identity photographs from the right and from the left, in profile and full face; the hair had to be cut short so that the ears were visible; they took your fingerprints, first only the thumbprint, but then all ten fingers; you had to present certificates: health certificates, vaccination certificates, police clearance certificates, recommendations; you had to be able to present invitations and relatives' postal addresses; you had to provide moral and financial guarantees, fill in forms and sign them in triplicate and quadruplicate, and if only a single sheet was missing from that stack of paperwork, you were a lost cause. [...] When we sat down together - the same people who had formerly talked about Baudelaire's poetry and discussed the problems of the spiritual character of the passions - we caught ourselves talking about affidavits and permits, and whether one should apply for a permanent visa or a tourist visa; knowing a minor civil servant at a consulate who could shorten waiting-times has been more vital over the last decade than the friendship of a Toscanini or a Rolland."²⁰

Despite increasing public attention around the world, hardly any country declared itself willing to accept a large number of refugees. On the initiative of U.S. President Roosevelt, the most important host countries held an international refugee conference in Évian, France, in July 1938. The result was disappointing, in that the representatives of thirty-two nations basically stuck firmly to their rigorous immigration policies. Golda Meir, subsequently Israeli Prime Minister, attended the Évian Conference as an observer and in her memoirs she wrote:

"Sitting there in that wonderful hall, and listening to the representatives of 32 states as they rose one after the other, explaining just how frightfully pleased they would be if they were able to accept a large number of refugees, but how awfully sorry they were that they couldn't - that was a shocking experience."²¹

The Australian delegate's uncompromising stance on Jewish refugees allowed him to get right to the point: "As we do not have a real racial problem, we don't feel inclined to import one by mass immigration of foreigners."²² Significantly enough, it was precisely and only the Aborigines who in the middle of November 1938 protested in front of the German Consulate General in Melbourne about the November pogrom having taken place.²³ Mackenzie King, Canada's Prime Minister, also feared that by solving an international problem an internal one might be created. According to his diary entries, in Canada there should be no question of an uncontrolled "mixture of foreign blood" coming in.²⁴ It was also King who purchased all the land around his residential property in Kingsmere so as to prevent development of a Jewish neighbourhood.²⁵ In the end the outcome of the Évian Conference played into the hands of the Nazi propaganda machine: "Nobody wants them because people have clearly recognised the disadvantages of Jewification", the *Völkischer Beobachter* crowed after the failure of the Conference.²⁶

Under pressure because of increased public awareness of the situation, the British government liberalised its immigration policy after the November pogrom. It facilitated the immigration of Austrian Jews, especially children and young people. However adults only

received their longed for entry permit once certain conditions had been met. To avoid any worsening of the already strained unemployment situation, Jewish women were only allowed to take on jobs that did not require a work permit, such as domestic work or employment in service industries. Men usually got a permit when they could prove that they intended moving on to somewhere else. The physician Dr. Nora Ohrnstiel fled from Vienna to England at the end of 1938, where she found work as a cook. In September 1939 she married Norbert Rockeach also from Vienna in Bath, England. Shortly afterwards the newly-weds emigrated to the U.S.A., where Nora's mother, Ada Ohrnstiel had already taken refuge in summer 1938.

Ada's husband Karl Ohrnstiel had until 1923 worked as chief government building surveyor at the State Railways Headquarters in Villach. In November 1941 he was deported to Minsk and afterwards to Treblinka extermination camp.

PALESTINE

In the desperate search for opportunities to escape and with dwindling chances of getting to one of the preferred host countries, such as the U.S.A. or Great Britain, Palestine increasingly came to play a key role as a destination for emigrants. Prior to the "Anschluss" the Austrian Zionist associations and Youth organisations that promoted emigration to Palestine were still relatively small, yet from spring 1938 membership numbers surged. By becoming a member of one of the Zionist movements, people hoped that their emigration chances – or at least those of their children – would improve, particularly thanks to the "Children and Youth *Alijah*" scheme.²⁷ To be allowed entry into Palestine, (the same also applied to people from some South American states), one had to prove possession of some agricultural skills. For their future work in a Kibbutz young, would-be immigrants into Palestine were re-trained in special camps. Without even considering other initiatives, the "Young People *Alija*" scheme saved the lives of thousands of Austrian children and young people, although they sometimes arrived in Palestine after remarkable odysseys.

Vested with its Mandate in Palestine, Great Britain followed an increasingly restrictive refugee policy. Alarmed by the continuous Arab unrest, which since 1936 had been targeted at Jewish immigration and Zionist activities, the British Government tried to placate the Arabs and in May 1939 it reduced to a minimum the immigration quota for Palestine – at the very time of the growing danger for the Jewish population in the German Reich. Quite apart from the massive political and military costs involved in containing the Arab revolts, the crucial factors behind Great Britain's uncompromising attitude were the overriding territorial interests at stake, both strategic and economic.

The reaction of Zionist organisations towards the British position was to promote illegal migration to Palestine. At first most of the organised transport traffic (legal as well as illegal) went via Carinthia, to the Adriatic ports of Italy and Yugoslavia. Even prior to 1938, Jewish refugee trains had already become a familiar sight for the Carinthian population. A secretary in Spittal/Drau described the Jewish transports coming from Germany:

"In the afternoon there was always a fast train that stopped in Villach. The trains were packed with people – all Jews – who were travelling to Israel. Anyway, I grew up in the countryside and this was the first time that I saw really elegant ladies, with lots of jewellery, with made-up lips, with dyed hair and loads of luggage. Then we always said: 'Come on, let's watch the Jews.' That was the first time that I had knowingly seen Jews."²⁸

“THE ARNOLDSTEIN TRANSPORT”

At the beginning of August 1938 a special train with about eight hundred people on board pulled out of a Vienna station, heading in the direction of Italy. The group that had been assembled consisted partly of members of the Zionist Youth organisation *Betar* and also amongst them was Leo Lilian from Villach. The train's destination was the port of Fiume (Rijeka), from where a Greek cargo boat was to set sail in the direction of Palestine. However the Italian border authorities refused entry into the country, because the boat had not yet docked. Until the transport ship arrived, the train plus passengers was to stand in Arnoldstein railway station. Together with other Zionist-minded Jews, Lotte Weinreb of Klagenfurt set about taking care of those who were kept waiting.²⁹

Eichmann threatened just about every day to redirect the special train *en masse* to Dachau, and two weeks later he finally ordered the train back to Vienna, to “put an end to the Arnoldstein comedy”³⁰, as he expressed it. For fear of really being reported to Dachau, Leo Lilian had quickly left the train on its return journey to Vienna,³¹ but afterwards he rejoined the group, for whose transport new plans were now being thrashed out. By following an international water route, the Danube, any future problems with transit visas might be avoided. The planned route ran from Vienna downstream as far as one of the Romanian Black Sea ports, and from there to Palestine by deep-sea ships. Just a few days prior to the November pogrom more than 1,000 Jews left the territory of the Reich, on the expensively hired DDSG steamers *Minerva* und *Grein*. Earlier another three hundred people had joined the “Arnoldstein group”, among them one-hundred-and-fifty former Dachau inmates who were compelled to leave the country immediately, under pressure from the National Socialist authorities.

The onward voyage of the refugees who had been stuck at Arnoldstein almost failed again, because of the efforts of the British Navy; they tried by all available means to prevent the overcrowded ship from landing in Palestine. Cunningly the refugees' vessel managed to dodge the warships and, taking it one step at a time, all the passengers were secretly put ashore.

With the outbreak of war in September 1939, transporting illegal immigrants to Palestine became increasingly challenging. Even prior to this, the big, respectable shipping lines had hardly taken any part in the illegal voyages - the fear of economic sanctions imposed by the British was too great. Conversely, for ship-owners who had always made their living in smuggling and other shady transactions there was still the allure of lucrative deals and high-yield gambles. But in the German Reich in the meantime a change of thrust in the line of policy was looming – from expulsion towards extermination.

INTERNED ON MAURITIUS

Before emigration was officially stopped in October 1941, one of the last groups of illegal immigrants to be transported to Palestine left Reich territory from Vienna. From the outset the entire scheme had been ill-fated. Because of technical problems, intrigues, threatened strikes and shortages of money, departure had been delayed for almost a year. In Vienna the scheme organisers could scarcely fend off the crowds desperate to escape. At the same time, the Gestapo and the “Central Office for Jewish Emigration” took advantage of the opportunity and issued the order that additional people had to be taken too – in many cases the old and sick. Eventually the initially planned group of five hundred emigrants, had swollen to one of eight-hundred-and-sixty persons. Aware of its monopoly position, the DDSG (river steamer company) now charged utterly exorbitant prices for transporting the

refugees. This was an extremely profitable deal for the shipping company, because it had also received an order for its entire passenger fleet to transport ten thousand Volksdeutsche people back upstream from Bessarabia³². Why not make use of the “Back home to the Reich” scheme to profit-spinning advantage? Instead of heading downstream empty, the shipping company let the Jewish emigrants pay for the outward leg, at great expense to themselves. This meant the enterprise doubled its profit and to this extent benefitted from National Socialist policies.

After more Jewish refugees from the “Altreich”, from the “Protectorate” (Bohemia and Moravia) and from Danzig had joined them, at the beginning of September 1940 four DDSG steamers with a total of 3,500 people on board left Vienna and Bratislava heading for the Black Sea coast. Crammed in on three sea-going ships the passengers then had to wait for a further three weeks in Tulcea, Romania, before their onward journey could continue. By then there were already bottlenecks in supplies of food and drinking water. Finally the three steamers *Milos*, *Pacific* and *Atlantic* put to sea under the Panamanian flag.

Conditions on the rusty old vessels that were equipped for hardly more than a hundred passengers were simply unspeakable. There was a shortage of food and when two of the vessels also ran short of coal all available timber on board was burned as fuel, including the interior fittings and the lifeboats. Moreover a typhus epidemic had broken out on the *Atlantic*. In November 1940 all three refugee vessels were intercepted by the British navy and escorted to the port of Haifa by patrol boats.

The British put on a show of toughness, ordering that the refugees be deported to a British colony. So the passengers from all three vessels were trans-shipped to the ageing French luxury liner *Patria*.

At dawn on 25th November the British began transferring the last passengers. But this operation had hardly been completed when an explosion shook the *Patria*, causing it sink to the harbour bottom within a few minutes. To sabotage the steamship’s onward journey, commandos from the Zionist underground army *Haganah* had attached an explosive device to the ship’s hull. The force of the explosion had been badly miscalculated; the intention had been to put the steamer out of action for a few days, but not to sink it.

Two hundred-and-sixty-seven people were killed in this incident, and several hundred more were injured. Rosa Friedländer from Klagenfurt was amongst those killed. Her husband Ignaz and their son Max survived. The latter was accepted into a Kibbutz and committed suicide at the age of fourteen.³³

With the exception of those survivors of the *Patria*, whom the British allowed to stay on in Palestine, all the other refugees were deported to Mauritius. A pre-planned act of resistance against deportation that the refugees mounted was put down by military force. On 9th December 1940 the British government shipped 1,580 people on two steamers to the sugarcane island in the Indian Ocean. They remained interned there until the end of the War, at Beau Bassin, the old Mauritian Central Prison.

It was thanks to the persistent efforts of Zionist organisations, that the British authorities allowed the internees to enter Palestine as immigrants, once the War had ended. Amongst those who had suffered so much was Josef Sternschuss, a factory owner from Villach. Prior to his dramatic escape into exile, he had been imprisoned at Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps for more than a year.

IN EXILE

Around 16,000 Austrian Jews fled to neighbouring Hungary, Yugoslavia, or Czechoslovakia after March 1938, or they took refuge in western European countries, such as France and the Netherlands. During the course of the War, they again fell into the hands of the National Socialists and were for the most part murdered.³⁴ On 13th March 1938 almost 182,000 people were living in Austria, who were deemed to be Jews under the terms of the Nuremberg Laws.³⁵ By the time emigration ceased - apart from very few exceptions - in October 1941, around 128,000 Jewish people had been forced to emigrate or to flee.³⁶ They survived in more than eighty states worldwide – from the United States to Shanghai, from South America to Palestine.

It proved difficult to build up a new existence, far from familiar surroundings, and often separated from family. For many the new environment created fear, profound existential crises and insecurity, the more so as the newcomers saw themselves as confronted with a vast number of problems. From the outset, most host countries restricted the refugees' legal status. With the outbreak of war, countries such as the United States and Great Britain classified Austrian refugees as "enemy aliens", which not only engendered a climate of mistrust amongst the locals, but could even result in internment in a camp. Finding work was also extremely difficult. The more highly qualified people, in particular, had problems finding an adequate position. In many instances it was the women in low-skilled jobs who became their families' sole breadwinner. For example Dr. Marcell Glesinger, a solicitor in Villach, and his wife Sophie did all sorts of odd jobs in Tel Aviv so that they could feed their family of four. Their son David recalls those bitter years:

"And then we arrived in Israel. My father had a doctorate which didn't help a lot. Unable to speak the language, no job because as a solicitor he would have had to learn the language first and then the law. No money; two small children who needed feeding. With his doctorate he worked as a road-builder and later on he became a graduate night watchman. He worked very, very hard. We were two small children and never understood why our parents hardly ate anything. When my sister asked them why they didn't eat they said that they had already eaten. Only later did we understand that there simply was not enough food to go round. Shoes were bought for me once every few years. As soon as they were too small, they were cut off at the front so that the toes showed through. We lived like this for many years, actually until the 1950s. And then we also had a war here. 1948, that was difficult too. My father worked nights as a watchman, and later my mother worked as a teacher in the 1950s. She set out on the Sunday and returned on Thursday. My father left at 6pm and returned in the morning. We stayed at home alone."³⁷

Strange traditions and customs, unfamiliar climate conditions, different eating habits – all these generated feelings of rootlessness and disorientation. Homesickness was among the refugees' commonest emotional experiences. Furthermore, separation from the old homeland, the old house or flat, the familiar working environment or school and, not least, the relatives, friends and acquaintances, who were so sorely missed, often triggered depression. Older people in particular found it very difficult to cope. Usually settling into the new environment was easier for the young; they could identify themselves with their new home more quickly than could the older generation, who sometimes felt like strangers in a strange world.

One essential criterion for integrating into any host country was to learn the language. Edith Tersch, born in 1928, managed this very quickly: "All I knew was *Please* and *Thank you*, maybe half a dozen another words. Then I went to school and I learned English because even though I was eleven years old, they put me in first grade. So I learned English and I sat there like a Dummie, but after a few weeks they put me in second grade. After the first year I was back up in the seventh class or where-ever I was graduated; I made mistakes on a few tests but I was a pretty good student."³⁸

Leopold Fischbach fled to the U.S.A. when he was twenty-six years old. There he changed his forename to Leo and felt unreservedly like a U.S. American, not least because of the fact that he did not encounter the slightest anti-Semitism.³⁹

¹ Cited in Daniela Elmauer, Salzburger Juden im Exil, in: Helga Embacher (editor), Juden in Salzburg. History Cultures Fates, Salzburg 2002, pp.84-101, here: p. 84.

² Questionnaire Dr. Marcell Glesinger, Welfare Centre of the Israelite Community Vienna, Emigration Department, Vienna, 17th May 1938. Archive of the Israelite Community Vienna, Jerusalem holdings, A/W 2590, 71.

³ Questionnaire Heinrich Hirsch, Welfare Centre of the Israelite Community Vienna, Emigration Department, Vienna, 30th July 1938. Archive of the Israelite Community Vienna, Jerusalem holdings, A/W 2589, 3.

⁴ Ursula Krechel, Shanghai fern von wo, Munich 2010, p. 5.

⁵ Gertrude Rothschild Collection. Leo Baeck Institute, New York City, AHC, AR 10887.

⁶ Questionnaire Oskar Salter, Welfare Centre of the Israelite Community Vienna, Emigration Department, Vienna, 5th July 1938. Archive of the Israelite Community Vienna, Jerusalem holdings, A/W 2590, 195.

⁷ Oskar Salter, application to the aid fund for victims of political persecution, New York City, 24th November 1957. ÖStA, AdR, BMF, 06/HF, ZI. 27.078.

⁸ Regina Spierer interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, New York, 1st Nov 2007.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Hermann Jonas, to the Restitution Commission, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt; Graz, 5th Feb 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 67/48, Sch. 19.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Remembrance Association, interviews - Eye Witnesses Remember. Villach Jews: 11th November 1938 - the Jewish pogrom. The situation after the Anschluss, at: www.net4you.com.

¹³ Leon Zwerling to the Restitution Commission, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt; Villach, 30th July 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 100/47, Sch. 7.

¹⁴ Cited in Gabriele Anderl, Emigration und Vertreibung, in: Erika Weinzierl/Otto D. Kulka (editors), Vertreibung und Neubeginn. Israelische Bürger österreichischer Herkunft, Vienna 1992, pp. 167-337, here: p. 179.

¹⁵ Herbert Rosenkranz, Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung. Die Juden in Österreich 1938-1945, Vienna 1978, p. 124.

¹⁶ Questionnaire Max Fischbach, Welfare Centre of IKG Vienna, Emigration Department, Vienna, 12th July 1938. IKG Vienna Archive, Jerusalem holdings, A/W 2589, 3.

¹⁷ Questionnaire Max Fischbach, IKG Vienna Welfare Centre, Vienna, 23rd Jan 1939. IKG Vienna Archive, Jerusalem holdings, A/W 2590, 52.

¹⁸ Edith Strauss interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Chicago, 14th April 2013.

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- ¹⁹ Questionnaire Norbert Tersch, IKG Vienna Welfare Centre; Vienna, 6th March 1940. IKG Vienna Archive, Jerusalem holdings, A/W 2590, 245.
- ²⁰ Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday. Memories of a European*; Frankfurt/Main 2006, pp. 463.
- ²¹ Golda Meir, *My Life*, New York 1975, p.158. Cited in Robert Probst, *Die Ahnungslosen von Evian*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17th May 2010.
- ²² *Ibidem*.
- ²³ Konrad Kwiet/Suzanne Rutland, Australien, in: Wolfgang Benz (editor), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol 1: Länder und Regionen, Munich 2008, pp. 36-42, here: p. 36.
- ²⁴ Charles Small, Kanada, in: Wolfgang Benz (editor), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol 1: Länder und Regionen, Munich 2008, pp. 187-195, here: p. 189.
- ²⁵ Don Gillmor/Achille Michaud/Pierre Turgeon (editors), *Canada. A people's history*, vol 2, Toronto 2001, p. 176.
- ²⁶ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 13th July 1938, p. 3.
- ²⁷ The Hebrew term *Aliyah* is used for Jewish immigration into Palestine. Literally translated it means 'advancement'.
- ²⁸ Norbert Schausberger (editor), *1938 - Zeitzeugen in Kärnten. Erinnerungen von Kärntnerinnen und Kärntnern an die Okkupation Österreichs*, Klagenfurt 1988, p. 132.
- ²⁹ August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich*, Klagenfurt 2009, p. 210.
- ³⁰ See Gabriele Anderl, *Emigration und Vertreibung*, in: Erika Weinzierl/Otto D. Kulka (editors), *Vertreibung und Neubeginn. Israelische Bürger österreichischer Herkunft*, Vienna-Cologne-Weimar 192, pp.167-309, here: pp. 277.
- ³¹ Interview with Arie (Leo) Lilian, Yad Vashem Archives, 0.3 Testimonies Department, Item 6606547.
- ³² Historically, Bessarabia was an area of land located on the European southeast shore of the Black Sea - an area that extends across today's Moldavia and the Ukraine.
- ³³ August Walzl, *Juden in Kärnten*, p. 228.
- ³⁴ Thomas Albrich, *Die Jahre der Verfolgung und Vernichtung unter der Herrschaft von Nationalsozialismus und Faschismus 1938 bis 1945*, in: Thomas Albrich (editor), *Jüdisches Leben im historischen Tirol. Vol 3: Von der Teilung Tirols 1918 bis in die Gegenwart*, Innsbruck 2013, pp. 187-356, here: p. 257.
- ³⁵ Jonny Moser, *Demographie der jüdischen Bevölkerung Österreichs*, Vienna 1999, p. 16.
- ³⁶ ÖBB-Holding AG (editors), *Verdrängte Jahre. Bahn und Nationalsozialismus in Österreich 1938-1945. Begleitdokumentation zur gleichnamigen Ausstellung*, Vienna 2012, p. 55.
- ³⁷ David Glesinger interviewed by Werner Koroschitz and Alexandra Schmidt, Tel Aviv, 30th Sept 2013.
- ³⁸ Edith Strauss interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Chicago, 14th April 2013.
- ³⁹ Leo Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 4th Aug 2003.

“ALL HABSBURGERS” – THE FISCHBACH FAMILIES

In 1909 Osias and Mina Fischbach moved from Klagenfurt to Villach; their two sons Ferdinand (1908) and Rudolf (1909) were at that point aged one year, and a few weeks, respectively. In the middle of the First World War in 1916, a daughter, Elisabeth, was born in Villach.

Moritz Fischbach, Osias' brother, moved from Klagenfurt to Villach in 1912, with his wife Amalia and their baby Leopold; in 1914 their second son, Josef was born. Speaking at a later date (in English), Leopold Fischbach found the forenames chosen by the two families very interesting: “My name is Leopold, my brother's name is Josef, and the names of my uncle's children are Ferdinand, Rudolf, Elisabeth – all Habsburgers!”¹

Leopold Fischbach's childhood memories were indelibly marked by the ubiquitous anti-Semitism – whether at school or around the neighbourhood, where middle-class Villach families had forbidden their children to have anything to do with Jews. As one of his cousins in Vienna, Gertrude Schwarz, recalled from her own experiences: “Villach was extremely anti-Semitic. At school they weren't on speaking terms with Jewish children.”²

Leopold (Leo) Fischbach

Born on 12th August 1912 in St. Ruprecht near Klagenfurt, Leopold Fischbach was the son of Moritz and Amalia Fischbach. Shortly after his birth the family moved to Villach, to Klagenfurterstraße 44, where the related Fischer family subsequently joined them. In 1914 Leopold's brother Josef was born. With the outbreak of the First World War Moritz Fischbach was drafted into the army, and the family's economic situation worsened drastically. Amalia was on her own, with their two small children and she had to struggle for the family's survival.

War, violence and exclusion: these were the experiences that shaped Leopold's and Josef's childhood memories. During the First World War, when Leopold was a small child, he became a witness and victim of a violent explosion at Villach Central Station, which blew in all the windows and doors of the Fischbach home – a traumatically shocking experience. In the aftermath, starving people in their masses looted the food stores at the ruined railway station. Once his father had returned from the War, he opened a small clothes shop in Lederergasse 12, which in economic terms provided the family with a moderate livelihood. The interwar period, which coincided with Leopold's schooldays, was already marked by an atmosphere of pronounced hostility towards Jews.³ After completing the lower grades at Peraugymnasium grammar school, Leopold Fischbach attended the Vienna Textile School, where he trained in the field of the manufacture of knitted and woven fabrics. After graduating from the Textile School he started his own small knitted goods workshop, but because of lack of capital, he was forced to accept a poorly paid wage-earner's job. Around 1928 Leopold's parents, Amalia and Moritz Fischbach also left Villach and moved to Schwaz in the Tyrol, where they managed a shop. In 1933 they followed their son to Vienna, where Moritz Fischbach was employed by a textile company, owned by a close relative. In an interview Leopold's cousin, Gertrude Schaier recalled the thoughts of the young Fischbachs

who were in a state of shock as they experienced the jubilation in Vienna after the “Anschluss” in March 1938:

“The Viennese went crazy. I can remember when Hitler was driven past our house on Stubenring in an open car and with his hand raised. And for years after that we thought: if we had had only thrown a bomb down there, the fate of the whole world would have been different. All that night, we burnt books, because you were not allowed to have books by Jewish authors in your home. Everyone spent their time trying to get a visa for abroad. This was all they did – to emigrate as soon as possible, and it was so extremely difficult.”⁴

Leopold Fischbach managed to escape: his aunt in New York sent him an affidavit so that he could board the *Westerland* in Antwerpen on 15th September 1938, bound for America. Twelve days later, on 27th September 1938, he arrived at the port of New York:

(Statement in original language) “When I arrived in New York City and I saw the Statue of Liberty, I couldn’t stand. I was so excited. My uncle, my cousin and my friend were at the pier and they brought me to my aunt in Brooklyn.”⁵

At first it was extremely difficult for Leopold Fischbach to find his way around in the unfamiliar environment. Not knowing the language and helped only by his relatives he went in search of a job.

After one week in his first job he quit, because his employer had cheated him out of a few dollars. Straight afterwards - the Austrian Leopold had now also become Leo - he found a new job for the next two years as a knitting machine operator. There in the Bronx he worked from six o’clock in the morning to ten o’clock in the evening. He only had lunch; a plate of soup, which was ten cents.

In 1940 Leo married Edith Schwarz in New York. She came from Vienna and had also fled the Nazis. Soon after their marriage, he opened his own knitwear manufacturing business in the Bronx, producing dresses and woman’s suits. In the course of time this small business developed into a successful enterprise, with seventy-five employees in the 1970s. In 1976 Leo Fischbach retired and moved to Florida, where his wife Edith died in 1994. Leo Fischbach passed away in 2009 at the age of ninety-seven.

Josef Fischbach

Josef Fischbach was born in Judenburg on 24th April 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. In Villach he attended primary school and the lower forms at the grammar school. Like his older brother Leopold, Josef went to the Vienna Textile School to train in knitting and weaving production⁶. However, until the National Socialists came to power he worked for the municipality of Vienna’s Städtischen Versicherungsanstalt (City Insurance Company). In the meantime he helped his brother, who had set up a small knitwear business in their parents’ spare room.⁷

In November 1938 he managed to escape to New York, where he first stayed at his aunt’s. Like his brother, he also struggled to find a job but finally found work in a hat factory. In December 1940 he married Greta Breindler in Manhattan. Of Jewish origin, she too had escaped from Vienna and reached the United States via England. In the following years the couple shared an apartment with Josef’s brother and his wife Edith. Eventually Josef Fischbach opened a children’s clothing shop, and his wife Greta was a clerical worker with

an insurance company. After retiring Josef Fischbach also moved to Florida with his wife Greta – just as his brother had done - thus fulfilling a very American dream. Josef died there at a relatively young age in 1978, followed by his wife in 2003. After their escape the two brothers didn't talk a lot about Austria – the memories were too painful for them: (Statement in original language) “They did not like to talk about it. They didn't want to go back to Vienna. I remember my mother always saying ‘I don't want to go’.”⁸

Ferdinand Fischbach

Ferdinand was the eldest child of Osias and Mina Fischbach. After primary school he completed a course of studies at the Business School⁹ in Klagenfurt, where he lodged with relatives.

For the following three years he attended the Textile Schools in Vienna and Brno. After graduation, in 1933 he became a self-employed exporter of leather skirts to Italy. From 1937 to the beginning of November 1938 he continued this work, in the capacity of a sales representative for *Tiller AG* in Vienna. Ferdinand was not only keen on fast cars but also on fast skis. In winter he spent hour after hour skiing in the Carinthian mountains. In summer he passed his leisure time at Lake Magdalenensee near Villach, where he owned a little bathing hut.¹⁰

In June 1938 his parents began looking for an opportunity to escape with their children. Yet for the time being, all their hopes and plans were shattered by the events of that November. During the pogrom Ferdinand, along with his father Osias, was arrested and deported to Dachau concentration camp.

A few months after being released from Dachau, in April 1939 Ferdinand and his parents managed to flee to Venezuela by way of Italy. Ill and traumatised, they found refuge there together with other relatives. In 1941 Ferdinand and his parents were able to gain entry into the United States as immigrants. Whilst in Venezuela Ferdinand had started a pickled gherkins business, thanks to which he had a little money to make a new start in the United States.¹¹ In August 1942 Ferdinand joined the U.S. army, which posted him to Burma to fight against Japanese forces. His wish to fight against the National Socialists in Europe was never realised.

Back in New York he and his father Osias applied themselves to making a success of their *Burlap Bag Business*. This means that they clattered their way around the farms of New Jersey and Connecticut in a truck, collecting used jute grain bags damaged by mice. These they then cleaned and mended in New York and finally sold them on to animal feed producers. To be closer to their clients, in 1949 Ferdinand decided to acquire a building plot in Branford in the state of Connecticut, (which today still serves as home to his two sons Robert and Gerald and their families). When the feedstuff companies started delivering their goods by giant truck, grain bags were no longer required. So, Ferdinand built his own farm and bred cattle and pigs, but above all chickens. After the chicken business went into decline, he began to breed capons, castrated young cockerels that reached a weight of six to seven kilograms within a few months.

In 1948 Ferdinand Fischbach had married Friederike Schey, who had been expelled from Burgenland. She too came from a Jewish retailing family who had run a business in Großpetersdorf, in the province of Burgenland. After being arrested and losing all their property, she and her parents had fled to New York via the port of Genoa, at the end of August 1938. She arrived in New York on 8th September, with only sixteen dollars in her pocket:

“In New York my mother worked as a waitress in a cafeteria. And my father never told us what exactly he did, until I finally followed him one day. He worked as a dish washer. He asked me not to tell my mother.”¹²

Ferdinand and Friederike Fischbach settled in well on their farm. In 1950 and 1952 their two sons Robert and Gerald were born. One of their memories of their father is of the nightmares that had troubled him throughout his life. Ferdinand died in February 1986 and Friederike in 2012.

THE SPIERER FAMILY

Mathias (born 1878) and Frime Spierer (1877), with their children Marianne (1904), Lea (1905) and Wolf (1908), moved from Galicia to Villach in 1913. From 15th January 1913 they briefly lived at Hans-Gasser-Platz (square) before being registered as resident in Dietrichsteingasse (road).¹³ Their changes of address suggest that the family had not yet quite managed to put down roots in Villach, or that they were only establishing themselves gradually. However, Widmannngasse 22 became the family's permanent place of residence from 15th March 1914, until they moved to Völkermarkt in 1928.¹⁴

What attracted the Spierer family to Villach was in all likelihood that families whom they knew were already living there. Together with Ignaz Fischer, who also came from Galicia, Mathias Spierer opened a manufactured goods shop at Rathausgasse 8. This appears to have stabilised the family's economic situation, because now they could provide their children with an extended education.

Marianne completed Commercial School in Klagenfurt ¹⁵, and afterwards was trained as an office clerk. At the age of twenty-one she moved to Vienna, but she kept Villach as her “normal place of residence” until 1928.

Her brother Wolf attended Grammar School in Villach¹⁶ and in 1931 he passed the Vienna Technical University state exam.¹⁷ As an engineer it was scarcely possible for him to find work in Austria at that time, so for a while he lived in France.

In 1933 Lea married the Viennese commercial employee Arthur Kant in Klagenfurt. At that time she was already branch manager of a business in Saalfelden. The bride's witness to the marriage was Osias Fischbach, a respected Villach businessman.¹⁸ Meanwhile Mathias Spierer had moved to Völkermarkt with his wife, where he opened a textiles shop in 1929. In addition, he also managed a newly launched general store in Bad Eisenkappel. Marianne had been employed right from the start as an office clerk for her parents' businesses. On 8th June 1930, she married Joseph Scharfberg in the Prayer House on Platzgasse (road) in Klagenfurt. He was a commercial employee who also came from Galicia. The newly-wed couple then completed their move to Eisenkappel, where they took over the running of Mathias Spierer's business, whilst in the years that followed Mathias and his son Wolf ran their shop in Völkermarkt, *Mathias Spierer & Sohn Fashion Accessories and Manufactured Goods*.

On 26th December 1937 Wolf Spierer married Regina Fischbach, daughter of a Klagenfurt retailer.¹⁹ Between 1933 and 1938 her father Jonas accommodated Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in his home, sometimes for months at a time. From 1933 the refugees were trying to reach Palestine via Italy – and so “they lived and ate with us; the poor things, most of them”.²⁰

Wolf and Regina Spierer fled to Paris as early as 17th March 1938. They arrived in France completely penniless – the ten Reichsmarks that each of them was allowed to take out of the country with them having only lasted until they got to Switzerland. Now finding a job was top priority.

Regina found work as a dress maker and earned the money necessary for day-to-day survival. Wolf Spierer was officially still a Polish citizen, which meant that there was the danger of him being deported to Poland. Eventually, after many bureaucratic difficulties, the British Consulate granted them an entry permit for Palestine, where they finally arrived in July 1938, after travelling by sea from Marseille:

“We were in Paris for three months and then we went to Israel. Israel was horrible, you just can’t imagine. When my husband left in the morning – he worked in an English camp – I never knew whether he would be coming home again in the evening. They had to go through the Arab quarter and there they lay down on their stomachs, on the floor of the bus, and opened all the windows so that the bullets could fly clean through. And that was every single day! One never knew what was going on.”²¹

Thanks to his technical training and his knowledge of English, Wolf Spierer got work as a mechanic at a British military camp north of Haifa. Later on during Israel’s war of independence against the neighbouring Arab states (1947–1949), he served in the field as a lorry driver, taking supplies up to the front line. At this stage the Spierers and their son Uriel (born 1944) lived in the city of Naharija, where the majority of residents were then German Jews.

After the 1949 armistice, the family moved to Haifa. There Wolf Spierer went into the taxi business, sharing a car with a partner. Regina Spierer vividly recalled the years of hardship in Israel:

“*My god, my god!* (statement in original language). We didn’t have anything to eat and we lived only on oranges for days on end. Until, after the War, the first parcel arrived from America; because my parents were already in the U.S.A. Then we ate - it’s difficult to describe – as if for the first time we had enough to eat! *Israel was terrible* (statement in original language). Dreadfully difficult! The boy didn’t eat anything; he lived on air.”²²

Gradually life started to return to normal. Wolf Spierer found a better paid job as an engineer and in 1953 their second child was born. In 1957 the couple decided to leave Israel and emigrate to the U.S.A. Only Uriel’s aunts Lea and Marianne as well as his grandparents Mathias and Frime Spierer, who – completely destitute - had also managed to flee to Palestine, remained in Israel. By August 1938 the Scharfberg shop in Eisenkappel had already become the property of Party member, Fritz Engel, who was also the “provisional administrator” of the Spierer business in Völkermarkt.²³

As recalled by a staff member, this is how the takeover of the Eisenkappel business was played out:

“Scharfberg was sitting at the cash desk and Engel came in told Scharfberg to get out immediately. So he had to give up his seat behind the cash register and Engel took his place there; this was just after the Nazi takeover. Mrs Scharfberg couldn’t stop crying when she had to leave the shop. He - Mr Scharfberg - told me not to talk to him because that would harm me.”²⁴

Together with Mathias and Frime Spierer, Joseph and Marianne Scharfberg and their five-year old son Kurt had been able to save themselves by reaching Palestine in December 1938, where they settled in Haifa. Marianne's sister, Lea had also managed to flee to Palestine but not before the end of 1939. Her husband Arthur Kant, the owner of a manufactured goods and fashion shop in Saalfelden was deported to Dachau concentration camp during the November pogrom of 1938.

The elderly married couple Mathias and Frime Spierer were no longer capable of adapting to the strange new environment. Completely destitute and in poor health they depended on their children Marianne and Wolf for financial help.²⁵

Marianne and Joseph Scharfberg appear to have been better at negotiating the first difficult years in a country whose language and traditions were alien to them. Soon after their arrival they opened a small food shop in Haifa, later returning to the textile trade, with which they were far more familiar. On much frequented Hertzl road, they ran a clothing and fashion accessories shop, where they sold men's and women's garments, underwear, ties and shawls.

Writing about her shop in a letter to Saalfelden when she was sixty-four years old - three decades after her escape – this is what Marianne Scharfberg said:

“My husband and I are still working hard. Our shop here is just like the one we had in Austria, and we shouldn't complain. We only wish there were peace in the world.”²⁶

THE LOEWE FAMILY

From early childhood the composer Alban Berg (1885–1935) had spent his holidays at the *Berghof*, a family property owned by his parents, in Heiligengestade on Lake Ossiachersee. Even during the war years, he tried to get away to the familiar environment of the Lake, whenever opportunity permitted. When the First World War ended, the administration of the *Berghof* estate was for a short while transferred into his hands.²⁷

Eventually, however, it could no longer be maintained, so in 1920 Alban Berg's mother Johanna sold the property to the Italian Caregnato family. In 1923 Dr. Erich Loewe, born in Munich in 1892, purchased the agricultural estate and managed it successfully until his expulsion by the National Socialists. Loewe had graduated in Philology from the University of Munich, and had subsequently studied Art History in Rome and Paris, finally working with the archaeologists in excavations at Nineveh, Baghdad and Babylon.²⁸ During the First World War he had served as a German intelligence officer in Turkey.

Alongside his agricultural interests, Erich Loewe, together with his brother Adolph, started up a new timber products and shoe-last factory in Heiligengestade. The factory duty-manager's residence was rebuilt and for a number of years it was placed at the disposal of Alban Berg, as holiday accommodation - he worked on his opera *Lulu* there, as well as on other pieces. In summer 1928 the composer enthused about his working environment at Lake Ossiachersee to friend and father-figure Arnold Schönberg:

“We have a rather comfortable little house, near to the lake and completely to ourselves (electric light, telephone, running water). I can work on the rented piano without disturbing anyone and without being disturbed; and we are still close enough to the Berghof and its charming current owners, as well as to the various lakeside hotels (thanks to buses and motor boats), not to feel as if we were alone in the midst of a wilderness.”²⁹

The “charming owners” is a reference to the artistically inclined Erich Loewe and his wife Luise. Loewe was a painter himself and a member of the Carinthian Art Association, even taking part in its 50th anniversary exhibition in 1937. In his day, the *Berghof* developed into a centre for all the arts, where painters, authors and musicians could meet.³⁰ The social attitudes displayed by the subsequently expelled estate owner are still remembered today:

“In winter the Loewe family provided Sattendorf School with free milk, which was then given to the poorest pupils. On the Loewe girls’ birthdays, virtually the whole school went across to the *Berghof*, and then games were organised there.”³¹

“The Loewe girls” Irmgard and Roswitha were born in Villach in 1925 and 1926. Maria Lauritsch, the estate cook, breast-fed Roswitha, along with her own son Franz.³² Irmgard and Roswitha attended Sattendorf primary school, and afterwards the Peraugymnasium grammar school in Villach.³³

The National Socialists did not just put an end to this apparently idyllic lakeside family lifestyle, they also destroyed the Loewe family’s financial livelihood. With Erich Loewe already incarcerated in Dachau concentration camp, his wife and daughters fell victim to the November pogrom. Roswitha Kubin recalled the events of November 1938:

“My mother had first come to the farm situated below the *Berghof* as a result of her marriage. She often went up to the Loewe estate. On “Kristallnacht” it was simply dreadful! When the Nazis came round, the woman was on her own in the house, together with her children. With their bayonets the men slashed all the fine upholstery of the French armchairs and hurled a wonderful glass cabinet to the floor! Horrible, horrible how the Nazis ravaged the place. Afterwards Mrs Loewe and her daughters came down to my mother’s, and spent the night there.”³⁴

After 1945, on account of the vagueness of the testimonies, it could not be proved beyond doubt that the alleged participants in the looting and destruction had actually been present. Consequently the People’s Court refrained from pursuing the matter any further and the case was closed. Erich Loewe and his father-in-law, Jakob Bernheimer, probably bumped into each other at Dachau concentration camp, since Bernheimer had also been arrested during the November pogrom in Munich. After both men had been released from the camp, with assistance from Erich’s wife Luise, the Loewe family looked for opportunities to leave the country. Eventually they managed to escape to Canada – it appears that their route took them via France to England and from there they reached Western Canada shortly before the outbreak of war.³⁵

During the War Erich Loewe found employment at a wool spinning mill in Vancouver. Despite the - for him - unfamiliar work, which he needed to cover the destitute family’s living expenses, he still applied himself to the visual arts. His works were displayed mainly in galleries and museums in British Columbia.

Even in his new home Loewe demonstrated his intense social engagement. From the mid-1950s, and with his characteristic passion, he delivered art classes to physically disabled young people; amongst other skills he taught the technique for mouth painting.³⁶

In the family's absence the *Berghof* estate was "Aryanised" in 1941, in favour of the "German Labour Front" (DAF). After the end of the War Erich Loewe applied to the Property Department of the Carinthian Provincial Government for restitution of his assets. Yet he subsequently heard nothing from them, until, somewhat belatedly, the Provincial Government sent a terse apology for any "mistakes made".³⁷ In the meantime, on 15th November 1945 the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB) had been appointed public administrator of DAF assets. In support of its objection against the restitution of the "Aryanised" property, it argued that the estate had already been insolvent prior to March 1938 and that consequently there had been a forced sale by auction in favour of DAF.³⁸ In fact the mortgage of 25,000 Schilling taken out with the *Villacher Sparkasse* in 1934 was a ridiculously low sum in relation to the total value of the assets. The purpose of the 1939 auction had merely been to lend a veneer of legality to an act of robbery. After numerous objections, the estate was finally restored to Erich Loewe in 1951. Since Loewe no longer had any intention of returning to Carinthia, he sold the estate in the following year. Erich Loewe had assumed Canadian citizenship on 5th March 1945. His death in his new homeland, Vancouver, in 1967, was followed by that of his wife Luise in 1981. Their daughter Irmingard Loewe (deceased 2003) worked as a secretary for various companies in Vancouver. Her sister Roswitha worked as a nurse and passed away, also in Vancouver, in 2012.³⁹

THE HIRSCH FAMILY

Velden – Vienna – London – Shanghai

Members of the Hirsch family, like those of many other Jewish refugee families, were separated during their escape and survived scattered across two continents. Before they all first saw each other again, they had to wait for ten long years. The family's history can be retraced in broad outline through Hans Hirsch's unpublished memoirs.⁴⁰

Heinrich Hirsch, Hans's father, was born the son of Galician immigrant parents in Vienna on 14th July 1897. After the First World War, which he witnessed at close quarters as a medical orderly, he completed his dentistry and dental technician training. Shortly before his marriage to Rosa Vater, of Viennese, non-Jewish origins, in April 1922, he converted to the Protestant faith. A few months after the birth of their son Hans in September 1924, the family moved to Velden, where Heinrich Hirsch opened a dental practice.

The newcomers adapted quickly and immersed themselves in the social life of the community. Heinrich Hirsch was a member of the local men's choir, an enthusiastic tarot player and a welcome guest as a figure-skater at Velden's winter festivals. In August 1932, daughter Dora was born in Klagenfurt. Her elder brother Hans attended the local primary school, and from 1934 the Villach Peraugymnasium grammar school.

The March 1938 "Anschluss" signalled a drastic change. For the first time in his life Hans was confronted with his Jewish roots – until now they had played no part in the life of the Protestant family.

He started to observe the Nazis' parades mistrustfully, the way the cities and villages were decked with Swastika flags and the masses who cheered Hitler and Göring with wild enthusiasm. At Villach grammar school the Protestant Religious Education teacher took to wearing an SA uniform in class. Lessons now started with "Heil Hitler" and Hans learned to

sing Nazi songs. His description of the burning of books in the school courtyard is worthy of special mention. The entry in his memoirs is only the second eye-witness account of the burning of books in Villach that is known to be extant.⁴¹ This is of major importance in light of the fact that – except for the scene on Salzburg's Residenzplatz (square) on 30th March 1938 – no other public book-burning in Austria has ever been documented. Even though the school courtyard can only be considered a kind of “semi-public” space, it still seems significant that it was here that the burning of library books was carried out.

(Statement in original language): “We had a ceremonial book burning. The director marched up and threw books on the burning heap before the assembled classes in the courtyard. There were constant celebrations about this or that and a lot of new songs had to be learned. I remember the Horst-Wessel-Lied and ‘Eine Fahne flattert uns voran’.”⁴²

In Hans's home municipality of Velden, his father Heinrich Hirsch was now no longer allowed to participate in the annual Remembrance Day celebrations for the victims of World War I – and this, even though he had been awarded a medal for bravery in recognition of his service on the eastern front and in the Balkans. The dental practice had to close, and his Steyr (car) was confiscated. Eventually the family moved to Vienna to live with relatives in July 1938, with a view to looking for opportunities to leave the country. The family experienced the November pogrom in Vienna but lived through it unscathed – thanks above all to the caretaker, who was forthright in facing up to the SA troops and denied the presence of Jewish families in the house. Because remaining in Austria was becoming increasingly dangerous, Heinrich Hirsch tried to reach Belgium illegally from Germany, so that he could organise his family's departure from there. This plan fell through and he returned to Vienna. In the desperate hope of becoming a qualified household servant, as a means of getting hold of the work permit and entry visa he needed for England, Heinrich Hirsch attended a private school to be trained as a butler. In the meantime, his wife Rosa hoped to get the sought-after British *working permit* as a qualified dressmaker. Eventually in the summer of 1939 there was a chance to send the two children to safety.

On 14th July 1939 Hans left Austria from Vienna West Station by means of a *Kindertransport* (children's transport convoy) heading for the British Isles. There, dressed in lederhosen, knickerbockers and traditional costumes, the refugee children were accommodated at the "Riversmead Home and Training School for Refugee Children from Central Europe", located in the northwest of England. In July 1939 another *Kindertransport* brought his sister Dorli (diminutive of 'Dora') to safety in the southwest of England; she was not quite seven at the time.

When Heinrich Hirsch finally got his visa for England it was valid for entry into the country from the end of August 1939 - and it at first looked as if there were no further obstacles to prevent the family being reunited again soon. Yet, when Great Britain declared war on the German Reich on 3rd September, this route to freedom was also blocked. Instead, Heinrich Hirsch was deported to a forced labour camp near Eisenerz in May 1940. Rosa, regarded as an “Aryan” by the National Socialists, desperately made every effort to find an opportunity for her husband to leave the country, all the more urgently since his health was deteriorating in the camp.

The last chance to flee turned out to be Shanghai. At the time, parts of the city had an extra-territorial status as international concessions. This meant that immigrants needed no visa. The entry of Italy into the war on the side of the German Reich on 10th June 1940 blocked

off the sea route to China, and that left only the significantly more arduous and more dangerous overland route to Asia.

By scraping together her last reserves of money and with the help of her family, Rosa Hirsch finally got the required entry and transit visas for her husband. It meant they would be separated for several years. With a fictitious entry visa for the Dominican Republic, Heinrich Hirsch fled to the Far East on 15th February 1941. His route took him from Russia to the borders of Manchuria, on the Trans-Siberian railway. On his way, he crossed the Chinese provinces occupied by the Japanese, and finally arrived at the safe port of Shanghai by boat on 7th March 1941.

What he got to see beyond Shanghai's famous skyline and its grand boulevards was a city criss-crossed with sewer-like water courses, which provided a particularly favourable habitat for a vast number of mosquitoes and rats. Apart from tropical diseases, such as typhoid fever, malaria and various forms of illnesses causing diarrhoea, European refugees were particularly troubled by the climate: high humidity, months of rain, temperatures of over forty degrees Celsius in summer and below zero in winter. The majority of the approximately 18,000 expatriates, among them over 4,000 Austrian Jews, lived in the city district of Hongkew, which had been heavily bombed by the Japanese.⁴³ Living in mass accommodation facilities or shabby rooms they depended on daily hand-outs of food from Jewish aid committees.

Some of the refugees showed tremendous imagination in finding ways for enlivening their dreary circumstances. With improvised materials they soon created small food shops, clothes shops, cafés, restaurants, theatres, pharmacies and medical practices, so that by and by the area took on a Central European appearance. Before long it was known as Little Berlin and Little Vienna. Soon after his arrival, Heinrich Hirsch opened a small dental practice at 15, Wayside Road. He had brought the necessary equipment with him from home. 250 grams of gold that he had incorporated into the steel-plate reinforcements of his wooden suitcase served as his start-up capital.

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, the whole situation changed dramatically. Germany's new ally Japan occupied Shanghai's long-standing free international district. At the Berlin Wannsee Conference In February 1942, the National Socialists agreed on the "final solution to the Jewish question" and now they tried to persuade the Japanese that it should be implemented in Shanghai too. However on this point the Japanese declined to comply with the wishes of their allies.⁴⁴ Instead they established a *designated area* in Hongkew, for "stateless refugees". In point of fact, this predominantly meant Jewish refugees from Central Europe, who had forfeited their German citizenship, when the "Eleventh Decree of the Reich Citizenship Law" came into force in 1941. All the refugees affected by this measure had to give up any dwelling or business located outside the *designated area*, and relocate into this ghetto, which they were only allowed to leave with the permission of the Japanese. The establishment of the ghetto led to a significant deterioration in living conditions - and Heinrich Hirsch was one of those who had to cope with them. The arrival of American troops in Shanghai in the late summer of 1945 brought no immediate end to exile. In some cases it took years before the refugees were finally able to leave the Chinese port.

The Austrian Federal Government, for its part, placed every conceivable bureaucratic obstacle in the way of the returning Shanghai refugees. Citizenship applications had still not been processed after months of delay; there was haggling over accommodation costs; and the various official institutions were asked to pass judgement on which refugees should

return home. Noting the large proportion of medical practitioners amongst the Shanghai returnees, the Chamber of Physicians urgently warned of a “surplus of doctors” – despite the fact that the Austrian Cabinet Council had shortly before complained about the shortage of doctors in light of the risk of an epidemic breaking out in Vienna. In connection with this, State Chancellor Renner also suggested rehabilitating “Nazi physicians”, who had been struck off. Of the more than two thousand Viennese medical doctors in 1946, about eight hundred were ineligible to vote because they were considered politically incriminated.⁴⁵ In January 1947 Heinrich Hirsch started for home on board the *Marine Falcone*, as part of a group composed exclusively of Austrian Jews; it was the largest returnee transport (764 persons). The journey by sea, operated by UNRRA, passed through the Suez Canal on its way to Naples, and from there it was by train to Vienna. The expatriates who had fled to Shanghai arrived home on 13th February 1947. After six years of being separated, Heinrich finally saw his wife Rosa again - she had spent the war years at her parents’ in Vienna. The reunited couple celebrated their silver wedding in Vienna, but shortly afterwards returned to Velden, where Heinrich Hirsch again opened a dental practice. Looking back on it, Heinrich Hirsch chiefly remembered Shanghai as a “miserable hole,” but it had saved his life.⁴⁶ At Christmas 1948 Heinrich Hirsch visited his children in England for the first time. His son Hans had taken his Higher School Certificate (English Matura-equivalent) and was now preparing to complete his studies in chemistry. He had decided to stay in England, where in 1953 he started a job in the Research and Development department of *Kodak*. Having been separated from her parents for nine years, Dora was by now fifteen years old and was completely estranged from them. Yet after hesitating for some while, she decided to return to Carinthia with her father.

The Austrian media also ran various reports about the return of the Shanghai refugees in 1947, for example a film in *Die Wochenschau* (weekly newsreel). According to Simon Wiesenthal, when it was shown in a Viennese cinema, something very telling happened: the commentator remarked that “these are Jews returning to Austria to play their part in the reconstruction of the homeland” and there was riotous laughter in the audience accompanied by shouts of “Vergasen!” (“Gas them!”)⁴⁷

¹ Leo Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 4th Aug 2003.

² Gertrude Schaier, interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Trieste, 28th Nov 2012.

³ For more information see Werner Koroschitz, Leo Fischbach, in: Werner Koroschitz/VIA (editors), *Der Onkel aus Amerika. Aufbruch in eine Neue Welt*, Klagenfurt 2006, pp.221-224; see also the documentary film *How can you call it Heimat* by Robert Schabus and Werner Koroschitz, Klagenfurt 2006.

⁴ Gertrude Schaier, interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Trieste, 28th Nov 2012.

⁵ Leo Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 4th Aug 2003.

⁶ ÖStA, AdR Finances, NHF, Zl. 38404 Josef Fischbach.

⁷ Questionnaire Josef Fischbach, IKG Vienna Welfare Centre, Emigration Department, Vienna, 13th Oct 1938. IKG Vienna Archive, Jerusalem holdings, A/W 2589, 3.

⁸ Michele Grunfeld interviewed by telephone by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 7th May 2013.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Gertrude Schaier interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Trieste, 28th Nov 2012.

¹¹ Robert and Gerald Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Branford, 29th March 2013.

¹² Friederike Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Pompano, 6th Aug 2003.

¹³ Letter from Villach Police Station regarding Marianne Spierer, to the Aid Fund for Politically Persecuted Persons; Villach, 29th Sept 1964, Zl. M-1105/1/64. ÖStA, AdR, BMF, 06/ HF, Zl. 21913.

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- ¹⁴ See Werner Koroschitz/Lisa Rettl, "Tu smo bili doma ..." O judovski družini Scharfberg v Železni Kapli / "Wir gehörten hierher ..." Über die jüdische Familie Scharfberg in Eisenkappel, Klagenfurt/Celovec, 2008, pp.75 f.
- ¹⁵ List of Jewish students at Klagenfurt Business School and Commercial School, compiled by Gernot Haupt.
- ¹⁶ Grade catalogues 1918–1926, Peraugymnasium School Archive, Villach.
- ¹⁷ Wolf Spierer, application to the Aid Fund for Politically Persecuted Persons; New York, 5th March 1963. ÖStA, AdR, BMF, NHF, ZI. 26001.
- ¹⁸ IKG Graz Wedding Registers.
- ¹⁹ Ibidem.
- ²⁰ Regina Spierer interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, New York, 1st Nov 2007.
- ²¹ Ibidem.
- ²² Ibidem.
- ²³ See Werner Koroschitz/Lisa Rettl, "Tu smo bili doma ...", p. 96.
- ²⁴ Philomenia Müller interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Bad Eisenkappel, 16th Feb 2008.
- ²⁵ Statutory declaration by Mathias Spierer, to the Aid Fund for Politically Persecuted Persons; Haifa, 11th Dec 1956. ÖStA, AdR, BMF, 06/HF, ZI. 3966.
- ²⁶ Cited in Werner Koroschitz/Lisa Rettl, Tu smo bili doma ...", p. 106.
- ²⁷ Erich Alban Berg, Alban Berg. Leben und Werk in Daten und Bildern, Frankfurt/Main 1976, p. 27.
- ²⁸ Vancouver Art Gallery (publisher), Erich Loewe, February 8th to February 27th, 1949.
- ²⁹ Cited in Juliane Brand/Christoph Hailey/Andreas Meyer (editors), Briefwechsel Arnold Schönberg – Alban Berg. Vol 2: 1918–1935, Mainz 2007, p. 328.
- ³⁰ Biographical data about Erich Loewe, compiled by his grandson Stephan Heep, New Zealand.
- ³¹ Gertraud Kramer interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Sattendorf, 6th Dec 2013.
- ³² Franz Lauritsch interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Landskron, 6th Nov 2013.
- ³³ Grade catalogue 1935/36, Peraugymnasium School Archive, Villach.
- ³⁴ Roswitha Kubin, telephone interview by Werner Koroschitz, Heiligengestade, 19th Nov 2013.
- ³⁵ Elmore Philpott, Artist Loewe, in: *Vancouver Sun*; 27th Feb 1947, no page reference.
- ³⁶ Vancouver Art Gallery (publisher), A Modern Life. Art and Design in British Columbia 1945–1960, Vancouver 2004, p. 169.
- ³⁷ Dr. Erich Loewe and Adolph Loewe, Restitution Application, Restitution Commission at the Provincial Court of Klagenfurt; Villach, 27th Dec 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 569/48, Sch. 38.
- ³⁸ Austrian Federation of Trade Unions, objection to the Restitution Commission at the Provincial Court of Klagenfurt; Villach, 7th May 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 569/48, Sch. 38.
- ³⁹ *Vancouver Sun*; 24th Aug 2012, no page reference.
- ⁴⁰ Hans Hirsch, My first 30 years. With a chronology of the next 50 years and a family history, no place of publication, 2004. Her father's life memories were kindly made available to the author by Andrea Hirsch of Swindon (Great Britain).
- ⁴¹ See Hans Haider, Nationalsozialismus in Villach, Villach 2005, p. 53. The relevant quotation can also be found in the article by Alexandra Schmidt, Antisemitismus macht Schule, p. 69.
- ⁴² Hans Hirsch, My first 30 years, p. 16.
- ⁴³ Michael Philipp, "Little Vienna" in Asien – Preface, in: *Zwischenwelt. Zeitschrift für Kultur des Exils und des Widerstands*, "Little Vienna" in Asien I, Vienna, February 2001, p. 17.
- ⁴⁴ See Jüdisches Museum im Stadtmuseum Berlin (publisher), Leben im Wartesaal. Exil in Shanghai 1938–1947, Berlin 1997, p. 35.
- ⁴⁵ Gabriele Anderl, Der Weg zurück, in: *Zwischenwelt. Zeitschrift für Kultur des Exils und des Widerstands*, "Little Vienna" in Asien – Exil in Shanghai II; Vienna August 2001, pp. 47-53, here: p. 51.
- ⁴⁶ Hans Hirsch, My first 30 years, p. 22.
- ⁴⁷ Helga Embacher, Neubeginn ohne Illusionen. Juden in Österreich nach 1945, Vienna 1995, p. 126.

**“Every day I prayed
that he would come back again”
Victims of the Shoah**

After the Grynspan attack in Paris, National Socialist propaganda aimed to fabricate a link between the “threat to the German Reich from international Jewry” and the destiny of those Jews who lived within the territories of the German Reich. From that time on, National Socialist Jewish policy was closely connected with the war effort and became part of a larger demographic project aimed at the “racial” restructuring of Eastern Europe.¹ In retrospect, the thrust of this reorientation was already hinted at by Hitler’s choice of words in his Reichstag speech of 30th January 1939:

“If international Jewish financiers inside and outside Europe should contrive to embroil the peoples of the world in another Great War, then the result will not be the bolshevisation of the planet and consequently the triumph of Jewry; rather the outcome will be the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe.”²

The first step towards realisation of this vision came when German troops invaded Poland in September 1939; the explicit aim was to create *Lebensraum* (living space) in the East for ethnic Germans. All non-Germans and “Volksschädlinge” (parasites on the people) were to be evicted from the conquered territories and deported to the fringes of the German sphere of influence, especially to the area around Lublin.

The first deportations of Jews and Poles were put into effect with terrible, violent excesses at the end of 1939. At the same time numerous interim ghettos were established, where the Jewish population was concentrated, in anticipation of their final deportation. Co-ordinating this operation was the Austrian Adolf Eichmann, who had meanwhile been appointed Special Representative for Deportations, under the command of Reinhard Heydrich, Director of Reich Security Head Quarters. The efficiency of Eichmann’s model for the expulsion of Austrian Jews had been well received by the Party leadership, so much so that it was now thought that Eichmann’s capabilities should be applied in the forthcoming “ethnic land re-parcelling” in the East.³ His talent for logistics would subsequently be called upon again for the mass deportations to the extermination camps.

Eichmann was also responsible for the so-called Nisko-project, in which about five thousand Jewish men were used as forced labourers for the construction of a projected “Jewish reservation” in the small town of Nisko – some ninety kilometres to the southwest of Lublin. In connection with this initiative, two transport trains arrived in Nisko from Vienna. The first left on 20th October 1939 with nine-hundred-and-twelve men on board, and the second on 27th October 1939, with six-hundred-and-seventy-two men. The IKG was commissioned to draw up a list of between one and two thousand “emigrants”. This involved using deception tactics to stimulate “interest” in transportation: the IKG was coerced into mailing the Jewish population and assuring willing participants that they would have considerable freedom to make a new life for themselves. In fact only a small proportion of the Jewish men transported from Vienna – about two hundred of them - were selected to work in the camp. By then the large majority had already been herded across the German-Soviet demarcation line with warning gunfire. Most of these men subsequently sought help from the Soviet authorities in their search for the means to return to Vienna. For this reason they were classified as

“unreliable” by the NKWD - Stalin’s secret police – and so they were deported to forced labour camps. Only about a hundred men returned from those camps to Vienna in 1957.⁴ One of those on board the first transport train that left Vienna on 20th October 1939 was the Viennese sales representative Robert Deman (born 1897). He was not destined to return. After saying her farewells to her husband in 1939, his wife Johanna Planer (born in Steindorf) escaped with their daughter Elsa to Villach, where relatives sheltered them. As their daughter Elsa recalled:

“Once he wrote us a postcard from Tarnopol. That was the last word I ever had from him. I missed him terribly. Every day I prayed that he would come back again.”⁵

Initially, the deportations planned by Eichmann had to be put on hold for a short time at the beginning of 1940, because of various difficulties with logistics, and problems with the authorities and institutional structures. However it must be noted that a “grey area of arbitrary freedom to murder”⁶ had been established by Nazi organisations operating in Poland at the beginning of the war, through a programme of acts of violence and deportations. This facilitated the transition to systematic killings and murders by members of the “Einsatzkräfte” (special units). The number of “Volksschädlinge” (parasites on the people) needing to be removed grew with each new territorial conquest.

On account of housing shortages in Vienna, at the beginning of 1941 the Reich leadership decided to deport the ca. sixty thousand Jews still living in the Reich Gau of Vienna as quickly as possible. Amongst them were a number of Carinthian men and women, who had been forcibly resettled there. They were all to be sent to the so-called “Generalgouvernement”, that is, the captured territories in the East. And in February 1941 the first deportations began. Within the following two months around seven thousand Viennese Jews were deported to the East, mainly to the Lublin area.⁷

On 15th February 1941 the book-keeper Norbert Tersch (born in Villach, 1899) was one of almost a thousand men, women and children who left Vienna’s Aspang Station on the first of forty-five deportation trains heading for Opole, a small town south of Lublin. Those destined for deportation had previously been concentrated in one of the collection camps in the second district of Vienna, where the IKG managed to supply them with meagre rations, until their eventual deportation. These second district camps were located at Kleine Sperlgasse 2a, Malzgasse 16, Castallezgasse 35. A further camp was located in an old people’s home at Seegasse 9, in the ninth district.⁸

The Viennese Jews were taken to the already completely overcrowded Opole ghetto. To the best of current knowledge, only twenty-eight persons survived. Norbert Tersch was not amongst them. The precise time and place of his death remain unknown to this day.

With hindsight and in many respects, the Wehrmacht’s attack on the Soviet Union on 22nd June 1941 marked a political turning point. The extermination of the Jewish population increasingly became an important war objective, directly bound up with events on the front-line. In particular, beyond the former Polish-Soviet borders, the command centres came up with a key new legitimating formula; the term “looter” as a synonym for “Jew” was now replaced. The equation Jew=partisan=Jew became the new watchword: “Wherever there is a partisan there is a Jew, and wherever there is a Jew, there is a partisan”. With this slogan, the conduct of the war and the policy of extermination had become interlinked and inseparable from each other.⁹

From summer 1941 a killing machine was set to work all along the German army's line of advance into the Soviet Union. In the process, the German war of aggression underwent a definitive transformation into a war of extermination, bringing a completely new dimension to the dispensing of death.

Apart from the so-called *intelligentsia*, it was at first the Jewish men, closely followed by the women and children, who fell victim to the killing-programmes of the various SS, Police and Wehrmacht units.¹⁰ In the Polish ghettos, that had originally been established mainly as transit camps, tens of thousands of Jews meanwhile perished from starvation, epidemics and as a consequence of violent outrages at the hands of the camp personnel. So it was that a process formerly directed at expulsion and relocation had transformed itself into one that was closely meshed with events on the front line and was focussed on extermination.

On 1st September 1941 the "Star of David" was introduced across the German Reich, to be worn by all persons deemed "full Jews" under Nuremberg Racial Laws. The timing of its introduction was not co-incidental. The advance against the Soviet Union was faltering, and the public mood was for the first time somewhat subdued. The intention of providing Jews with a badge, because they were "trouble makers who undermined morale" was explicitly expressed by Goebbels in his diary entry for 12th August 1941.¹¹

The actual introduction of the compulsory badge followed shortly afterwards and it meant not just absolute control over the Jewish population and its isolation in the public sphere, but it also - and particularly - made it easier to identify victims for the planned mass deportations. In mid-October Himmler issued a prohibition on the remaining, now destitute, Jewish population leaving the country. On 20th January 1942, at Berlin's Lake Wannsee, fifteen political decision-makers, in a meeting of about one-and-a-half hours followed by breakfast, decided the fate of continental Europe's remaining Jews. Under the chairmanship of Reinhard Heydrich, the guidelines for the forthcoming genocide were discussed in a relaxed atmosphere. All Jews aged sixty-five and over, war invalids and those decorated with the Iron Cross were to be taken to Theresienstadt, the newly founded "ghetto for the old"; all Jews who were able to work were to be handed over to the German wartime economy as cheap slave-labour, and all who were not capable of working - the weak and old, the children and the sick - were to be killed without exception.

The Carinthian Odilo Globocnik was appointed leader of the prospective extermination operation, which was known as "Operation Reinhard", after the death of Reinhard Heydrich - killed by Czech partisans on 4th June 1942. At the time, Globocnik was still Lublin's regional head of SS and chief of police.¹² At his side stood Ernst Lerch, who was a coffee house owner from Klagenfurt.

Their involvement in mass murder in Poland was to carry no legal consequences for them. Globocnik evaded his responsibility with the help of a potassium-cyanide capsule and his adjutant, Ernst Lerch, managed to escape from Wolfsberg de-Nazification camp. Given his involvement in the "Operation Reinhard" and the mass murder of about 1.8 million Jews, an action was brought against him in Klagenfurt in 1971. However, at the request of the public prosecutor, in May 1972 the actual trial was adjourned after a few days and never restarted. Ernst Lerch lived unmolested in Klagenfurt until his death in 1997.¹³

DR. OSKAR JANOWITZER

Born in Vienna, on 17th June 1874, the lawyer Dr. Oskar Janowitz owned a house at Theodor-Körner-Strasse 26, in the Lind district of Villach, (today August-Jaksch Strasse). In line with National Socialist expropriation policy and with his forced resettlement in Vienna, he

was obliged to sell the house in 1939, to his tenant Dr. Franz Ebner, a physician and NSDAP party member.

Janowitz was deported from Vienna on 23rd November 1941. The transportation convoy consisted of about two thousand people and, when it set off from Vienna, its original destination was the Riga ghetto. However the convoy was diverted to Kowno in Lithuania, where all the deportees were shot immediately on arrival on 29th November 1941.¹⁴

Karl OHRNSTIEL

Karl Ohrnstiel was born in Kasejovice near Pilsen on 5th January 1885. After university he moved to Villach in around 1920, as a senior technical employee at the State Railway Headquarters. However in 1923 he left the “city on the Drau” with his wife Ada (née Moeller) and their daughter Nora, born in 1917. They headed first to Wiener Neustadt and later moved to Vienna.

In 1939 Ada and Nora Ohrnstiel were able to escape to Ada’s home town Trieste, *en route* for the U.S.A. in 1940. By contrast, Karl Ohrnstiel remained in Vienna. On 28th November 1941 he was deported to Belarus, to the Minsk ghetto; the precise date of his death is unknown.

Having managed to escape with her daughter, at the age of fifty Ada Ohrnstiel found herself confronted with the challenge of earning her own living for the first time. Yet her creativity and skill as a seamstress eventually saw her through to attain the status of a designer of highly sought-after hats. At the end of the 1940s she opened her own hat shop in Portland, later moving on to Palo Alto. Ada died on 16th April 1996, at the Biblical age of 106. In 2012 her great-granddaughter Linsey Corbin won the Carinthian Iron Man competition.¹⁵

As early as November 1941 a start had been made on setting up Belzec extermination camp, and in March 1942 it went operational. By the middle of 1942 the Sobibor and Treblinka camps followed suit.

The camp personnel was largely composed of people with a good deal of relevant experience in the National Socialist euthanasia programme, murdering disabled people. In line with earlier practice, the killing process at the three newly built camps at first used exhaust gasses with a high carbon-monoxide content from diesel engines. Later they moved up to using the “more efficient” pesticide Zyklon B.¹⁶ Jewish inmates were routinely sent in to remove the corpses, and normally after a while they were replaced by other inmates, so that they could be murdered themselves in turn.¹⁷ At Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka about 1.3 million Jews had been killed by the end of 1942 alone. By the time that “Operation Reinhard” came to an end in October 1943, a further ca. 600,000 Jewish victims had followed them. Many died during transportation to the death camps.¹⁸

When visiting his Carinthian home, Globocnik was greeted by brass bands, choirs and cheering crowds. He had the valuables and clothing taken from the victims in the camps distributed to the needy.¹⁹

As “Operation Reinhard” was reaching its first peak in the Generalgouvernement, dozens of transportation trains were meanwhile bringing older Jews from across the whole of the Reich to Theresienstadt, where many did not survive long because of their age and the dreadful living conditions. Leopold Blau, had lived in Villach since 1904, where he had managed his shop, *Kaufhaus Elba* in Weißbriachgasse (road), with his wife Elsa Blau. He was aged sixty-eight when he was deported to Theresienstadt on 29th June 1942. His wife Elsa had already been packed off to her home in Czechoslovakia, where she went into hiding and survived.

Between 19th September and 22nd October 1942 eleven trains with about nineteen thousand people on board left Theresienstadt in the direction of Treblinka. Leopold Blau was amongst those transported on 23rd September 1942.²⁰

EMILIE LITASSY

Emilie Litassy worked at the cinema box office at what would later be the Red Salon in the *Schloss-Hotel*, Velden. She was also one of the co-organisers of the traditional Velden Ice Festival. On 13th August 1942 she was deported to Theresienstadt on transportation train no 35. At that time she was seventy-five years old. Allegedly she implored the Gestapo officials at the time of her arrest: "Let me die here in Velden; I'm old and my feet hurt so."²¹ In her death notice issued by Theresienstadt concentration camp the date and cause of death were given as 11th July 1943, and "heart muscle degeneration".²²

From mid-1942 the National Socialist extermination campaign covered the whole continent, and in terms of basic functionality it worked as a well organised, administrative-bureaucratic system ²³ that was in a state of continual optimisation. The building of new extermination camps and the enlargement of existing ones (such as Auschwitz-Birkenau) made it possible to extend the scope of deportations. And again the enhancement of the machinery of death took a huge step forward with the introduction of the pesticide Zyklon B. On 2nd October 1942 Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler gave the order that concentration camps located in the German Reich should be made "Jew-free", and that all the Jews should be transferred to Auschwitz and Lublin.²⁴ It was precisely this order that was to prove fatal to Maria Gornik of Villach, who had been a prisoner in Ravensbrück since 21st February 1942. On 6th October, just four days after Himmler's directive, she was deported to Auschwitz on a transportation train together with over five hundred other Jews, including twenty-nine Austrians. And there she was murdered on 16th October 1942.²⁵

In response to shifts in the overall political context, the function of the concentration camps within the territories of the German Reich began to change from the end of 1942. The repression and elimination of political opponents and racially motivated persecution had long been the prime objectives. Yet the continuing war and the resulting shortage of labour in the industrial and construction sectors called for a thorough re-evaluation of the usefulness of Concentration Camp prisoners. The Nazi leadership came to regard them as a reserve of exploitable labour that could in particular be supplied to the arms and construction industries. The SS consequently sealed an increasing number of deals with state-owned and private armaments manufacturers and building corporations. The SS set up more than forty "external camps" for prisoners assigned to labour duties. They were erected in the vicinity of the factories and construction sites, particularly in the Danube and Alpine Gaus - and they included a concentration camp established on the Loibl-Pass in Carinthia in 1941. The "Stammlager" (main camp) at Mauthausen assumed the role of administrative centre and transit camp, from where the prisoners were distributed to the "external camps" and the supply of replacement labour for the individual factories and construction sites was regulated.²⁶

Six months later, on 21st June 1943 Heinrich Himmler ordered the liquidation of all Jewish ghettos in the East. The Jews who were fit for work were to be used for forced-labour in the various concentration camps. The others were to be sent straight to the extermination camps to be murdered.

ERNST AND MARGARETHE KOPEINIG

In a letter of 16th February 1942 to the German embassy in Bratislava, the Reich Government announced that it was now ready to send twenty thousand strong, young Slovakian Jews to the East to make good labour shortages.²⁷

From mid-March 1942 the deportations of these workers to the Lublin district began as promised. On the transportation train of 12th April, brother and sister Ernst and Margarethe Kopeinig were among more than a thousand deported Slovakian Jews. Ernst Kopeinig had been born in Trvna/Slovakia on 7th December 1912 and his sister Margarethe was two years younger (born 7th October 1914). From 1933 they had lived with their parents Josef and Irene Kopeinig (née Schönfeld) and their four siblings in Bleiberg near Villach, where their father Josef Kopeinig worked as a shoemaker.

Whether the whole family escaped to their former homeland in 1938, or whether they had been deported there is unknown – and the same uncertainty applies to the fate of most of the family members. Only Ernst and Margarethe's movements can be traced through the authorities' files: Ernst Kopeinig was transferred from Lublin to Auschwitz on 22nd May 1942, where he died on 9th July 1942, at the age of thirty. The last documented mention of Margarethe Kopeinig was the record of her deportation to Lublin on 12th April 1942.²⁸

Ludwig Severin Hausmann was born in Villach on 10th October 1916, the son of Oberleutnant (mid-ranking officer) Bernhard Hausmann, who was stationed in the city. On an unknown date, Ludwig was first deported to Plaszow concentration camp²⁹, southeast of Krakow, where SS-Hauptsturmführer Amon Göth, originally from Vienna and notorious for his violent excesses, served as camp commandant. On 10th August 1944 a total of 4,589 male Jews were transferred from Plaszow to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria; among them was the twenty-eight year old Ludwig Hausmann. Bruno Erbsmann, who was part of this transportation convoy along with Hausmann described conditions:

“Half the night we spent lying packed together on the assembly ground in Plaszow. At 1am the SS men herded us forward like a flock of sheep. Shouting and lashing out, their henchmen crammed us into the trains, ninety or hundred to a wagon. Our company of a hundred were put into a refrigerated truck, which was completely lined with sheet-metal. There wasn't even [the smallest] window like the other wagons had. At first it was cold, but slowly it became warmer, until finally we couldn't breathe. People were gasping for air. They lay on the floor as if mown down, one on top of the other, and they didn't even have the strength to crawl to a small slit in the door through which a little air could enter. Some started to bang on the wagon walls. Then a little SS man stepped into the wagon and beat up the people who were standing nearest the door. He said that if he heard another sound from the wagon, he would pour petrol over it and set it on fire. Only at 6am did they let us into another truck. In the afternoon we set off. The journey was a nightmare, the August sun beating down on us remorselessly. We could hardly breathe, it stank and we were packed tighter than sardines in a tin. We got no water. We couldn't move to the side, stand, or sit. These torments lasted for three days and three nights. When we arrived there were already many corpses amongst us.”³⁰

Ludwig Hausmann survived the transport torture and, immediately after arrival at Mauthausen Stammlager, he was transferred onwards to the external camp at Melk, where the prisoners had to dig underground tunnels for the *Steyr Daimler Puch AG* armaments

corporation. Between April 1944 and April 1945, at the Melk external camp alone, over five thousand prisoners died as a result of lack of safety precautions, malnutrition, maltreatment and wilful murder by the guards.

Ludwig Hausmann died on 30th October 1944, two months after he first set foot in Melk Camp.³¹

MARIE LOUISE MAYER

Marie Louise Mayer (née Gottlieb) was born in Vienna on 27th December 1882 and grew up in an upper-middle class environment. In 1904 she married Otto Mayer, a commercial director, and their children Helene and Karl were born in 1905 and 1907. From 1917 they had owned *Villa Bonaventura*, in Augsdorf near Velden. At the end of the 1920s Marie Louise Mayer started to work as a writer and she penned a series of comedies, some of which were highly successful on the Vienna stage. Her feuilleton work for the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* and the *Neue Freie Presse* was also well received. Her husband Otto died in 1936. After the "Anschluss", she associated herself as a Jewish woman with the monarchist resistance networks and - as a member of the legitimist circle around Erich Thanner and Johann Müller - she was made responsible for forming a women's group. Her Vienna apartment in Floragasse 7 served as a meeting place for many opponents of the regime and would certainly have been monitored by the Gestapo from an early date. In November 1939 Marie Louise Mayer was arrested together with a few fellow campaigners, and on 26th April 1944 she was deported to Auschwitz, where her trail disappears. In 1946 her children gave up all hope of their mother's return and she was officially declared dead.³²

MARKUS SCHAIER

The back of a postcard dated 6th November 1941, from Markus Schaier to his friend Friedrich Schatzmayer. It was sent from Kolomyia, Ukraine, which had been occupied by the Wehrmacht since August 1941 and was converted into a ghetto in March 1942. The four postcards in total that he wrote from Kolomyia to his Social Democrat friend in Klagenfurt were the last signs of life from the Schaiers. Markus Schaier was born in Tlumacz, Poland on 23rd April 1887 and lived in Klagenfurt with his wife, who was also Polish. They both disappear from the records in the Kolomyia ghetto, although their children survived in exile. The postcard reproduced here is one of very few still extant written items from that particular ghetto.

CHARLOTTE KLARFELD

Charlotte Klarfeld, born 7th April 1888 as a Polish citizen and resident in Vienna, was the owner of *Villa Clotilde* in Velden. In October 1938 she fled to her home town of Lemberg, whilst her property in Velden was being "Aryanised". She was arrested by the Lemberg Gestapo in September 1941 and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. Her precise date of death is unknown. Her husband Sigmund Leo Klarfeld also perished during the Shoah.³³

CASE STUDIES

Moritz and Amalia Fischbach

From 1912 to 1928 Moritz and Amalia Fischbach and their sons lived in Villach, where they owned a clothes shop and a wholesale rags business. After a brief spell in Schwaz, Tyrol,

they finally moved to Vienna, where Moritz Fischbach found work in a close relative's textile factory.

In autumn 1938 the two sons, Leopold and Josef, managed to flee to the United States, where some of their widely dispersed, originally Galician, family had settled. However, the parents' efforts to assemble the paperwork required for their own escape and to follow their sons to the U.S.A. proved unsuccessful. At that point Leo Fischbach took matters into his own hands from America:

"I heard that Cuba would issue visas for five hundred dollars per person. But I didn't have the money, because I was just starting out in America. So I spoke to one of my American cousins and told her: 'I can get my parents out provided I can organise the visas from Cuba'. She said she didn't have the money either, but that she could get me a loan taken out in her name. I would just need to pay her back seven and a half dollars a week. Back then that was a lot of money for me, because I only earned twenty dollars a week. But of course I went ahead with it; I bought the visas, sent them to my parents and they boarded the *St. Louis*."³⁴

Moritz and Amalia Fischbach boarded the ship in Hamburg on 13th May 1939. Moritz's brother Jonas, a Klagenfurt shopkeeper, and his wife Amalia (née Dull) also managed to board the vessel. The *St. Louis* finally put to sea, with more than nine hundred Jewish refugee passengers. Near Havana the voyage came, at least temporarily, to an end. The Cuban authorities denied the vessel landing. Leo Fischbach reported on the situation:

"They entered the harbour in Cuba, and my uncle, my aunt and their daughter were already there, having arrived on the last ship that was allowed in. My uncle stood on the dock and waved, he actually saw them [my parents] – but Cuba did not let them in."³⁵

The crew now turned to the American government for help, but they also refused point blank to take the vessel in. For some time the ship sailed along the east coast of America, yet to no avail, until finally the German shipping company ordered the *St. Louis* back to port in Hamburg. The passengers started to panic. They knew what returning to the German Reich at this point would mean.

At the last minute the passengers, more than nine hundred of them, managed to disembark at Antwerp. From there, about a quarter of the refugees were able to make the onward journey to England; the remainder were allocated to Belgium, France and Holland – countries that would, of course, themselves soon be occupied by the Wehrmacht. So although the majority of the *St. Louis*'s passengers had successfully managed to escape for the time being, they were to end up back in the German Reich. On landing at Antwerp, Moritz and Amalia Fischbach were taken to the south of France, where he was at first interned in a camp. The further details of his imprisonment are unknown. Two months after being released Moritz Fischbach died in France at the age of fifty-one.³⁶

Amalia Fischbach was detained at the Drancy prison camp to the northeast of Paris. On 6th November 1942 she was deported to Auschwitz and as soon as the transportation train arrived on 8th November, she was immediately murdered.³⁷

Jonas and Amalia Fischbach were also taken to France. They were interned at the Les Milles camp near Aix-en-Provence and they survived thanks to the intervention of a French couple. A few days prior to the camp's scheduled evacuation and imminent deportation of

the inmates to various concentration camps in the German Reich, André Donnier and his wife Georgette freed several camp inmates, hiding the Fischbachs in their garden house. In his medical practice, André Donnier also treated wounded members of the *Résistance*. In May 1943 he was betrayed, and the Gestapo searched his apartment and surgery. However, the Fischbachs were lucky and went undiscovered. André Donnier subsequently spent more than a year in Gestapo custody. Meanwhile his wife Georgette looked after the couple from Klagenfurt, taking them from hiding place to hiding place. After the Liberation the Frenchwoman helped them emigrate to the U.S.A. At the Yad Vashem memorial, the names of André and Georgette Donnier appear on the list of *The Righteous Among The Nations*. To this day the descendants of the two families hold an annual reunion in France, in memory of their parents.³⁸

Heinrich Rosenthal

Heinrich Rosenthal was born in Vienna on 18th April 1925, the elder son of Philipp and Adele Rosenthal (née Stift). The Rosenthal family moved to Peraustraße 16 in Villach, probably in March 1931. In the 1938 Villach directory Philipp Rosenthal's profession is listed as "writer".

Before the end of March 1938 the family moved back to Vienna. During the events surrounding the November pogrom, Philipp Rosenthal was arrested and transferred to Dachau to be held in "protective custody". He was detained there for what was at that stage an unusually long period, namely until May 1939. After his release from Dachau, there is no further trace of him. During her husband's imprisonment his wife Adele Rosenthal put all her efforts into making sure that Heinrich at least reached safety. Finally in March 1939 he got a place on a special Kindertransport train. These rescue convoys helped approximately ten thousand Jewish children reach exile in foreign countries between the end of November 1938 and 1st September 1939. Along with other children and adolescents, Heinrich travelled from Vienna to France, where the Jewish aid organisation *Organisation Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE)* took care of them and at first they brought Heinrich to the *Chateau de la Guette* children's home, to the east of Paris. The total costs for rescuing and maintaining the children were borne by the Jewish Rothschild banking family. When German troops invaded France in June 1940, all the children's homes operated by *OSE* were evacuated and the children were taken to safety in the south of France. In the course of all this, Heinrich Rosenthal arrived in Brives-Charensac, a small municipality in the Auvergne, where he was able to attend the vocational school. In the summer of 1942 the Vichy Regime, which collaborated with the German Reich, agreed to deliver up to the Nazis ten thousand Jews from the forty *départements* of the unoccupied zone. At the same time police and administrative resources were put at the disposal of the Nazis for tracing and persecuting Jews.

During a large-scale raid on 26th August 1942, the now seventeen-year-old Heinrich Rosenthal was picked up and handed over to the Gestapo. They transferred him to the Drancy assembly- and transit-camp located twenty kilometres northeast of Paris, which was known as "Death's waiting-room". From August 1942 transportation convoys heading for Poland were routine and on 9th February 1943 Heinrich was deported to Auschwitz Extermination Camp as part of transport No 46. In all likelihood, he was murdered immediately on arrival.³⁹

Norbert Troller

Norbert Troller was born the youngest of five children in Brno on 12th January 1896. After his Matura (school leaving examination) he enlisted as a soldier in 1915, and at the end of the First World War he started to study architecture in his hometown. He attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna between 1925 and 1927, where he completed his studies, and immediately afterwards he opened his own architect's office in Brno.

As the "Aryanisation" process got underway in March 1938, Norbert Troller appeared in the records as the owner of a tract of lakeside land in Velden. This plot, with its obviously attractive location, came into the hands of Dr. Otto Knab, an engineer from Berlin, for the derisory sum of 2,600 Reichsmarks. In a letter to the NSDAP Gau leadership in Vienna he wrote that he would build "a small villa and a fabulously beautiful orchard and rose garden" on the Aryanised plot.⁴⁰ In the run-up to the "Aryanisation" sale Knab had mobilised his network of contacts and had commended himself to the relevant public authorities as the author of various scholarly essays "to the advantage of the government of our Führer, Adolf Hitler"⁴¹ - apparently to lend weight to his intent to purchase and to accelerate the process. In 1939 Norbert Troller had to close his architect's office in Brno. In his autobiography *Theresienstadt – Hitler's Gift to the Jews* written in the U.S.A., he vividly described the atmosphere of fear, cautious optimism and deepest despair that began to spread among the Jewish population of Czechoslovakia.

In October 1941 the deportations started, at first only affecting Jewish refugees from the German Reich. But at the beginning of 1942 the NS regime eventually cast the net of deportation more widely to include Czech Jews, so that it now also became Norbert Troller's concern:

"One morning I found a pink slip of paper pushed under my door. Although we knew about the transportations, it still came as a horrible shock when it affected you personally. I had a nasty gut feeling and was paralysed with fear. I had to force myself to make preparations that I had been thinking about for a long time. (...) All deported persons were instructed to take with them one inventory itemising all their furniture and another list of all their valuables, jewellery, money, supplies, property assets, etc. in order to make it easier for the Nazi criminals to rob the 'Untermenschen' [Nazi jargon; literally: 'inferior persons'], and of course the 'Untermenschen' didn't have the right to complain."⁴²

In March 1942 Norbert Troller was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto, which had deviously been placed in nominal Jewish self-administration, under the so-called "Judenrat" (Jewish Council), despite the obvious fact it was actually controlled by the National Socialists.⁴³

In the ghetto Norbert Troller bumped into his sister Alice Perlhafter and her daughter Dora, who had been deported a few weeks before him. Every male ghetto resident who was capable of heavy work was obliged to spend his first three weeks digging graves, but afterwards Troller was seconded to the ghetto architectural office, to exercise his professional skills. Whilst he was working there, he managed time and again to steal a variety of papers from the office, from which he could make secret sketches of everyday life in the ghetto. Troller was also successful in finding safe hiding places for these documents. The "Judenrat" – a term coined by the Gestapo and SS – was compelled to make regular "selections" [i.e. selections of inmates for transportation] around which the struggle for survival in the ghetto revolved. Even today the role of the Jewish Councils (Council of

Elders) in the ghettos is the subject of intense controversy. On the one hand, they were certainly forced to co-operate with the NS authorities, but on the other, they also tried to use the broadest range of means at their disposal to bolster the ghetto residents' will to live and to rescue the greatest possible number of human lives. The constant struggle to ensure one's own personal survival was the defining rule of everyday life in that terrible place and later it deeply troubled those who successfully saw out the war:

"It had become a never-ending, desperate struggle to avoid being selected for transportation – not to be transported to a death somewhere in the East. Fearing for one's life, at first slowly, but then alarmingly quickly, we forgot about moral rules, about decency, about helping others, as well as all the other rules that had been part of our education (...)."44

As well as looking after his own well-being, Troller tried in so far as he could to protect and support members of his family. This he managed to do only until the early autumn of 1942, when his sister and niece were selected for deportation. On 5th September 1942 a transport train from the Theresienstadt ghetto arrived at Raasiku railway station, about twenty kilometres from Tallinn. At the station a further selection was made from the approximately one-thousand-five-hundred Jewish prisoners; only a small proportion was singled out for forced-labour. The great majority was taken on buses to a nearby area of sand and woodland in the present day village of Jägala. There they handed over their clothing and valuables before being shot and buried in the mass graves that had been dug beforehand.⁴⁵

Troller's niece Dora was one of very few who survived.

By September 1944 Norbert Troller himself had survived twenty-eight "selections" at Theresienstadt, but eventually he too was chosen. Some drawings of his own and some made by other prisoners had been smuggled out of the ghetto and had reached Switzerland by circuitous routes. There they fell into the hands of National Socialists, and the Nazi camp leadership at Theresienstadt was immediately instructed to identify the originator. In September 1944 Norbert Troller was transferred to Auschwitz, where he was initially detailed for forced-labour. His profession probably saved his life. He found a "Kapo" (a prisoner-functionary, working as a member of the team that ran the camp and enjoying corresponding privileges) who was interested in architecture and Troller talked him into a deal, exchanging lessons for additional food rations.

After his liberation from Auschwitz by the Russian army on 27th January 1945, Norbert Troller managed to force his way through to Krakow. Once more his drawings helped him with his day-to-day struggle for survival: he exchanged pictures for food. Shortly after the end of the War he returned to Brno. Only a few family members had survived.

As regards the drawings he had hidden at Theresienstadt, Troller was fairly certain that they would have been found and destroyed. However, from what was said by another surviving inmate in June 1946, he accidentally discovered that, after his transfer to Auschwitz, some of the ghetto residents had wrapped his pictures in a cushion cover and hidden them under a roof beam. So, for the second time in his life, Norbert Troller started on a journey to Theresienstadt and he did indeed find the cache in the place described. Today his sketches can be found at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. They are among the most significant testimonies to everyday life in the Theresienstadt ghetto.

Norbert Troller himself emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1948 and at first worked as an architect for the National Jewish Assistance Board. Around sixty synagogues were built in the United States from his plans. From 1959 to 1978 he had his own very successful architect's office in

New York, and was awarded many prizes. He died there at the age of eighty-five on 24th December 1981.⁴⁶

¹ Christopher R. Browning, *Der Weg zur "Endlösung"*. Entscheidungen und Täter, Bonn 1998, p.16.

² Reichstag speech by Adolf Hitler, 30th Jan 1939. Cited in Volker Ullrich, *Adolf Hitler. Die Jahre des Aufstiegs 1889–1939*, Frankfurt/Main 2013, p. 752.

³ Marianne Enigl/ Christa Zöchling, *Der Weg in den Holocaust. Vor 70 Jahren begannen die Massendeportationen*, in: *Profil*, 12th Dec 2009.

⁴ Jonny Moser, *Die Apokalypse der Wiener Juden*, in: Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien (publisher), Wien 1938, Vienna 1988, pp. 287-297, here: p. 295. See also see DÖW Exhibition Text, *Die ersten Deportationen nach Polen 1939*, at: <http://ausstellung.de.doew.at>.

⁵ Elsa S. interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Villach, 13th March 2013.

⁶ Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Die Jahre der Vernichtung 1939–1945*, Munich 2006, p. 214.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

⁸ Angelika Königseder, *Polizeihaftlager*, in: Wolfgang Benz/Barbara Diestel (editors), *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Vol 9: Arbeitserziehungslager, Ghettos, Jugendschuttlager, Polizeihaftlager, Sonderlager, Zigeunerlager, Zwangsarbeiterlager, Munich 2009, pp. 19-52, here: p. 45.

⁹ For further information see for example the chapter *Vom Massenmord zur Ausrottung*, in Lisa Retzl/Peter Pirker, "Ich war mit Freuden dabei" *Der KZ-Arzt Sigbert Ramsauer. Eine österreichische Geschichte*, Vienna 2010, p. 91.

¹⁰ See Christopher R. Browning, *Der Weg zur "Endlösung"*, pp. 34 ff.

¹¹ Diary entry, Joseph Goebbels, 12th Aug 1941. Cited in Peter Longerich, "Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!", *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933–1945*, Munich 2006, p.165.

¹² For further information see Siegfried J. Pucher, "...in der Bewegung führend tätig". Odilo Globočnik – Kämpfer für den "Anschluß", *Vollstrecker des Holocaust. Mit einem Vorwort von Karl Stuhlpfarrer (=Dissertationen und Abhandlungen 41/Disertacije in razprave 41)*, Klagenfurt/Celovec 1997.

¹³ Hans Haider, *Kärntner Jüdinnen und Juden. Gedemütigt – Verfolgt – Vertrieben – Ermordet*, Villach 2007, pp. 47 ff.

¹⁴ Saul Friedländer, *Die Jahre der Vernichtung*, p. 294; on the date of death see also DÖW, Shoah Victims database.

¹⁵ Teresa Strasser, *Sharp-mind, survival skills keep 105-year-old vital*, in: *Jewish Weekly*, 9th Feb 1996, at: www.jweekly.com; see also Eric Espe, *People: Ada Ohrnstiel, Palo Alto's oldest resident*, *Paloalto-Online*, 6th March 1996, at: www.paloaltoonline.com.

¹⁶ Katrin Reichelt, *Gaskammern*, in: Wolfgang Benz (editor), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft; in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol 4: Ereignisse, Dekrete, Kontroversen, Berlin 2011, pp. 141-142, here p. 142.

¹⁷ See Richard Glazar, *Die Falle mit dem grünen Zaun. Überleben in Treblinka*, Frankfurt/Main 1992.

¹⁸ Saul Friedländer, *Die Jahre der Vernichtung*, pp. 507 ff; see also Ernst Klee/Willi Dreßen/Volker Rieß (editors), "Schöne Zeiten". *Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer*, Frankfurt/Main 1988, pp. 208 ff.

¹⁹ Hans Haider, *Kärntner Jüdinnen und Juden*, p. 48.

²⁰ Information provided by ITS Bad Arolsen, after Theresienstadt File, Doc.No. 5020519.

²¹ See *Velden 2000. Informationsmedium der Sozialdemokraten der Gemeinde Velden*, June 1995, Edition 3, p. 1.

²² Digitalised death notification, original at the National Archives Prague, Terezin Initiative Institute, at: www.holocaust.cz (27th Jan 2014).

²³ See Saul Friedländer, *Die Jahre der Vernichtung*, p. 506.

²⁴ See Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin 2000, p. 351.

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- ²⁵ Judith Buber Agassi, *Die jüdischen Frauen im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück: Wer waren sie?*, Berlin 2010, pp.69 ff. Maria Gornik's name along with the names and dates of others who were imprisoned can be found on the CD accompanying this document.
- ²⁶ See Lisa Rettl/ Peter Pirker, "Ich war mit Freuden dabei", pp.154 ff.
- ²⁷ See Carlo Mottogno, *Sonderbehandlung in Auschwitz*, at: <http://vho.org>.
- ²⁸ See Wilhelm Baum/Peter Gstettner/Hans Haider/Vinzenz Jobst/Peter Pirker (editors), *Das Buch der Namen. Die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in Kärnten*, Klagenfurt–Vienna 2010, pp. 62, 125, 568ff.
- ²⁹ Plaszow was built in 1940, as a forced-labour camp, and on 10th January 1944 it was converted into a concentration camp. For Hausmann's time at Plaszow, see DÖW, Shoah Victims Database, where the name „Hausmann“ is spelt „Hausman“.
- ³⁰ Bruno Erbsmann, "Als wir ankamen, waren bereits viele Leichen unter uns", at: www.mauthausen-memorial.at (8th Dec 2013).
- ³¹ Date of death, see DÖW, Shoah Victims database.
- ³² For biographical data, see Christine Kanzler, Marie-Louise Mayer, at: http://www.univie.ac.at/biografiA/projekt/Widerstandskaempferinnen/Mayer_Louise.htm, as well as DÖW, Shoah Victims database.
- ³³ See DÖW, Shoah Victims database, as well as August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich*, Klagenfurt 2009, pp.190 and 225.
- ³⁴ Leo Fischbach interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Boca Raton, 4th Aug 2003.
- ³⁵ Ibidem.
- ³⁶ Ibidem.
- ³⁷ Ibidem.
- ³⁸ Georgette Donnier wrote a twelve page report about these events; it was translated into English by Susan S. Tribbitt, granddaughter of Jonas and Amalia Fischbach. For a summary of the report, see the Yad Vashem website, *The Righteous Among The Nations*, the Donnier family.
- ³⁹ Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, *Endstation Auschwitz. Die Deportation deutscher und österreichischer Kinder aus Frankreich. Ein Erinnerungsbuch*, Cologne 2008, pp. 7 ff. and p. 113.
- ⁴⁰ Otto Knab in a letter to Raimund Gruss, Vienna; Berlin, 26th June 1939. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files Norbert Troller.
- ⁴¹ Otto Knab letter to the Property Transactions Office; Vienna, 29th July 1939. StLA, FLD, Aryanisation Files Norbert Troller.
- ⁴² Norbert Troller, *Theresienstadt – Hitler's Gift to the Jews*, Chapel Hill 1991, pp. 11 f. (Translation from English by the author).
- ⁴³ See Vojtech Blodig, *Alltag im Theresienstädter Ghetto*, in: Institut Theresienstädter Initiative/DÖW (publisher), *Theresienstädter Gedenkbuch*, Prague 2005, pp. 39-52, here p. 39.
- ⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 35.
- ⁴⁵ See Kaspar Näf, *Der Holocaust und die Konzentrationslager in Estland*, at: <http://stolpersteine-langen.de> (Deportationsorte/ Raasiku).
- ⁴⁶ Norbert Troller, *Theresienstadt*, pp. XXI ff.

“Reparations” and restitution The legal and social framework

Still scarred by the traumatic experiences of the concentration camps and by harsh living conditions in exile, only a few of the Jewish men and women who came from Villach returned to their hometown after the end of the War. In essence, this small group of returnees hoped to be able to pick up the pieces of their pre-1938 lives, to get their homes back, and to get on with business as usual.

The reality was somewhat different; widespread incomprehension, rejection and a remote frostiness were the order of the day. When Emil Friedländer met a former neighbour on a visit to his hometown of Klagenfurt in 1952, he remarked that he was now living in Israel. To this the neighbour's unsympathetic response was: “I see! I thought Hitler had finished off all the Jews.”¹

Former National Socialists, fellow-travellers and regime-beneficiaries had meanwhile cast themselves in the role of victims of the bombing-war and of the Prisoner of War camps, so that they made harsh comparisons between their perceptions of what the home-coming Jews had been through and their own past experiences. Former National Socialists now re-invented themselves as the energetic champions of reconstruction, conveniently forgetting that they themselves had played such a large part in the destruction of their country.

As the situation stood, from both the political and social perspective, the memories that the true victims articulated were most unwelcome. On top of such personal spitefulness, there was also the very insensitive manner in which the (Carinthian) authorities conducted themselves. For example, they still used forms from the NS period for the registration of radios, so that as late as 1947 applicants had to certify that “no Jews lived on the premises”.²

In a public opinion poll published in August 1946, forty-six percent of the population professed themselves to be against the Jews returning to Austria - an opinion that was also reflected at the level of the political elites and their policy decisions.³ Goebbels' former polemics about emigrants allegedly enjoying the coffee house life of London, Paris and New York, were very often adopted by the politicians of the Second Republic, almost as a knee-jerk reflex. Even the former concentration camp inmate Leopold Figl, for example, expressed the view at a Salzburg meeting in November 1945 – one month prior to his appointment as Austrian Federal Chancellor – that “it would be much more comfortable for emigrants to remain seated in their club chairs rather than suffering for Austria”.⁴ Figl's statement was neither an exception nor a *gaffe*. It simply reflected the attitude of the majority Austrian population towards the Nazi regime's Jewish victims and other victim groups.

This grass-roots anti-Semitism, partly implicit, partly open, found its direct expression in the Austrian Federal Government's political handling of reparation awards for Jewish Holocaust survivors.

Top of the newly established Republic's political agenda was gaining recognition from the Allies as the first victim of Hitler's Germany and as a “liberated state”, under the terms of the Moscow Declaration of 1943.

The so-called “victim-thesis” was meant to protect Austria from having to make reparation or compensation payments to foreign countries. But it also became a core argument in domestic politics, in that it would allow the Austrian state government successfully to fend off

all compensation claims from persons who had been expelled or otherwise persecuted. And it even made it possible to demand reparation payments from other states. Consequently in the summer of 1945 Austria categorically rejected any share of responsibility for the Holocaust:

“The persecution of the Jews occurred during the period when Austria was occupied by German troops. The persecution was ordered by the German Reich authorities and implemented with their support. Because Austria was then occupied by foreign troops, it had no government of its own. Consequently it did not authorise this measure, still less was it in a position to prevent it. In accordance with the Law of Nations, any compensation claims from Austrian Jews would need to be addressed to the German Reich and not to Austria.”⁵

It was not abstract legal and moral considerations that finally induced Austria to signal (at least verbally) its readiness to compromise somewhat over the question of compensation. The decisive factors were rather the substantive foreign policy- and financial interests at stake:

“As regards compensation of Jewish victims, we must not overlook the fact that Austria also requires financial support for its reconstruction. As already noted, the Jews play a key role in the financial world. Consequently it would hardly be advisable to upset them by a show of excessive stinginess in the compensation of their persecuted co-religionists.”⁶

What this example shows above all is just how deeply rooted Austrian anti-Semitism was. Even as they endeavoured to win over world public opinion, the Austrian government still had recourse to such traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes as the “rich Jew”, seamlessly perpetuating pre-1945 hostile polemical attitudes toward the Jews.

Two features particularly characterised Austrian post-war policy: on the one hand, difficulties were put in the path of refugees trying to return home, and on the other, these same refugees were accused of not contributing to Austria’s reconstruction. This kind of double standard could only have an extremely detrimental impact on the way any compensation programme was put into practice.

VICTIMS’ ASSISTANCE ACT

On 17th July 1945 the first Victims’ Assistance Act was passed. Initially its provisions were restricted to victims who were former members of the resistance. Here too the Moscow Declaration of 1943 and the “victim-thesis” had their part to play: the Allies held out the prospect of recognising Austria as the first victim of Hitler’s Germany, only on condition that it had independently done its bit, contributing towards its own liberation. And so, between 1945 and 1955 reasons of state obliged Austria to emphasise and make great show of earlier resistance to the NS regime.

Against this, however, the logic of the “victim-thesis” meant that compensation awarded to Jews would have amounted to an admission of partial culpability and complicity with National Socialist rule. For this reason, in 1945 the only persons regarded as victims of National Socialism were those who had come by harm or had been killed in the course of political activities for the sake of a free and democratic Austria. By placing the emphasis on the Resistance, Austria’s founding political parties, the SPÖ, KPÖ and ÖVP essentially created a concept of “the victim” from which Jews were excluded.

Victims' Assistance was a form of "reparation" that functioned within the framework of social and welfare legislation; that is to say, an award of compensation depended on the actual social circumstances of the victim in question. Any compensation that was granted therefore represented no more than a welfare benefit.⁷ Yet many surviving Jewish victims no longer had a place of residence in Austria, most of them were no longer Austrian citizens, nor had they at any time been active in resisting the NS regime. So, in the immediate post-War years, those who had been expelled continued to be excluded from claiming welfare assistance.

In the early days, Austria rejected out of hand any negotiations with Jewish organisations over compensation claims. And they did so by tacitly invoking the Moscow Declaration: "Austria has no need to make reparations, because it has been guilty of no infringements", was the claim that came across loud and clear in 1946 from Ernst Kolb, subsequently ÖVP Minister for Trade and Reconstruction. In the years that followed it was to be repeated over and again, like a mantra, by representatives of all political parties.⁸

It was only in response to pressure from the Americans and the British that the Austrian Federal Government started talks with Jewish interest groups – admittedly, not without repeatedly suspending and intentionally prolonging negotiations, as the Social Minister of the Interior, Oskar Helmer, had recommended should happen, during a Council of Ministers meeting in 1948.⁹ At the same session of the Council, which significantly enough took place on 9th November 1948, the tenth anniversary of the November pogrom, the ÖVP Minister for Agriculture, Josef Kraus, asked the question "why at this specific time should a whole race be granted special privileges?".¹⁰ This referred to the "desire in American circles" to see the establishment of a fund for impoverished Jewish returnees. What's more Oskar Helmer, despite having spent the NS period as an insurance company employee, saw "only Jews spreading everywhere" and worried about social injustices because "in 1945 everything had been taken away from the Nazis too".¹¹

It is not surprising, then, that Jewish compensation claims were rejected out of hand, with an appeal to the nation's straitened financial circumstances. In 1948 registered National Socialists classified as "less incriminated" received an amnesty, and the way in which they were treated could hardly have been more different. Their salary arrears were generously paid and their confiscated property was handed back to them – not infrequently "Aryanised" property whose legal owners had fallen victim to the persecution and extermination policies of the NS regime. The government parties eagerly scrambled to pick up the political support of the former National Socialists, who were entitled to vote again for the first time in 1949. And they showed every bit as much zeal when it came to undermining and minimising any compensation claims on the part of the Jews.

The Federal Government usually only took a step down the road towards "reparation" when the moment appeared propitious, in relation to the on-going negotiations over the State Treaty [i.e. over the restoration of full Austrian independence]. Direct and indirect pressure exerted by the Allies played an essential role in this. So, the US authorities stationed in Austria strongly recommended that the State Department in Washington should put pressure on Federal Chancellor Leopold Figl, in the hope that - some four years after the War had ended - they could finally make some progress with the issue of "reparations" for Austrian Jews still living in abject poverty.¹²

"One can only marvel, that Austria has so far not made any actual demands on the Jews, through the Worldwide Jewish Organisations",¹³ the Union of Jewish Workers noted laconically in December 1953, referring to compensation negotiations in Austria.

The pressure group for the “racially persecuted” had to wait for all of four years, before the relevant National Council Order granted them their first pension entitlements in February 1949.

In the following decade there were numerous amendments to the law. Eventually the twelfth amendment to the Victims’ Assistance Act in 1961 granted the Victim Associations the range of entitlements that they had been demanding for so long.

For the first time those compelled to wear the “Star of David” and young people who had been forced to abandon their school education also received “reparation”. The same applied to persons who had suffered loss of income because of National Socialist laws enforced in Austria. From 1961 the list of people entitled to reparation also included the so-called “U-boats” (who had survived the NS period in hiding, often using false identities), the returnees from Mauritius, Shanghai or Karaganda¹⁴, Jews who survived the ghettos, as well as detainees in the Allies’ internment camps. The last of these provisions was a clear concession to former members of the Wehrmacht and SS.

For sure, the majority of reparation entitlements still depended on Austrian citizenship, so that all those stateless Austrian men and women who had fled, and been obliged to accept citizenship in their country of exile, were not eligible for reparation. Expatriates who were no longer Austrian citizens were only entitled to compensation for wrongful imprisonment, detention in internment camps, being forced to wear the “Star of David”, or being compelled to go into hiding. Compensation for detriment to professional and educational development was still reserved for Austrian citizens.

It was only on 22nd May 1969 - almost a quarter of a century after the end of the War – that the Republic of Austria finally made its mind up and acknowledged “being forced to flee” as a ground for compensation, under the 20th amendment to the Victims’ Assistance Act. By that time, of course, the circle of entitled claimants had already shrunk significantly, and so delaying tactics had paid off for the Republic of Austria.

AID FUNDS

In 1956 the “Assistance Fund for Victims of Political Persecution Permanently Domiciled and Resident Abroad” was established – though only after international political pressure. Talks with representatives of the Jewish organisations about setting up this kind of fund had been held in parallel with negotiations over the State Treaty. Soon the term “Aid Fund” was preferred, to indicate that this was not a question of mandatory, universal support but “a socially motivated initiative to meet a need for assistance”.¹⁵

With a total endowment of 550 million Schillings, the Aid Fund allowed for modest one-off payments to expelled persons, who had not returned home. Entitlement was limited to persons persecuted on political grounds (*inter alia*, because of their origin, religion or nationality), who had been Austrian citizens on 13th March 1938 and who had been continuously resident in Austria for at least the full ten years prior to that date. Compensation was calculated on the basis of degrees of social need and of detriment to health suffered. Anyone who received ongoing financial support under the Victims’ Assistance Act, was excluded from eligibility for Aid Fund payments, and vice versa.¹⁶ Ignoring the large diversity amongst the groups of claimants, functionaries of the ÖVP Comradeship of Politically Persecuted Persons expressed outrage at the way compensation was dispensed under the newly established fund:

“We fully appreciate the concern for comrades living abroad who are not provided for. There are certainly old people out there who no longer have the means to return home. However we cannot avoid the impression that some of them no longer intended to step onto Austrian soil ever again. This makes their solidarity with the nation very questionable; yet today they are demanding reparation from Austria.”¹⁷

The final sticking point in this polemical stand-off was the demand that those political victims “who had remained in the homeland and done everything for Austria and shouldered all the burdens” should be given priority for compensation purposes.

When the Aid Fund was established the rightist press reacted with an openly anti-Semitic commentary. Under the headline “Austria’s gift to the Jews” the *Kärntner Nachrichten* waxed indignant about the “Israelite Religious Community’s blackmail methods”.¹⁸ The FPÖ’s press-organ applauded Fritz Stüber, a Parliamentary Representative¹⁹, who – in a debate on 18th January 1956 - accused members of the government of “having succumbed to the demands of International Jewry.”²⁰ In the process he insinuated that the Jewish Associations were “profiteering”, once more perpetuating the claim that the Jews themselves were to blame for anti-Semitism.

Most forthright in speaking out against this slur was Communist Parliamentary Representative, Ernst Fischer. “From his [Stüber’s] speech resonated the criminal attitude that drove millions of human beings to horrible deaths; from it echoed the cannibalistic conception of anti-Semitism that ended with its gas chambers and concentration camps. Stüber spoke as once Goebbels and Hitler did, about Jewish ‘world domination’ and ‘a global Jewish conspiracy’. I was just waiting for him to refer to the ‘Elders of Zion’”²¹; this was Fischer’s outraged riposte. However addressing the issue in hand, he also demanded that “people living in Austria who had been adversely affected by fascism” should be given preferential treatment. He assumed that the majority of those who had been expelled now lived in America, and that “as the richest country on the planet” it should be able to come up with its own welfare package for these people.²²

No less robust was the parliamentary debate over the Twelfth Amendment to the Victims’ Assistance Act and the Law Concerning the Establishment of a Compensation Fund for Victims of Political Persecution on 22nd March 1961. Once more the FPÖ were the self-appointed mouthpiece of aggrieved National Socialists and of all war victims. So it was that FPÖ Representative Willfried Gredler demanded “compensation for everybody, on the basis of equal rights”.²³ He continued by listing every sum of money already raised by Austria for compensation purposes. Gredler concluded with this appeal: “let us at last make an end to all these exasperating issues, that only drain the budget and blight negotiations, and that are of a nature fit to poison the atmosphere of this House!”²⁴

On 22nd March 1961 the “Compensation Fund for Property Lost by Victims of Political Persecution” (Compensation Fund) was established. The compensation offered covered bank accounts, shares, cash, mortgages and payments of discriminatory taxes (for example the so-called Reich Emigration Tax or Jewish Property Tax). The Compensation Fund’s enquiries turned out to be rather difficult, however. Apart from Land Register searches, investigations at Provincial Finance Offices, the Stock Exchanges and the banks all had to be carried out. Particularly in the provinces, there were too few suitable solicitors with both the necessary knowledge of due processes in 1938, and the required expertise in financial matters.

At the level of foreign affairs, a meeting between the Finance- and Foreign-Secretaries of Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany, was scheduled for Bad Kreuznach in April 1961. The purpose behind the conference was to clear up all unresolved questions left over from the NS and post-War periods.

The outcome was the Bad Kreuznach Agreement, whereby Germany agreed to contribute a total of ninety-five million German Marks to extending the scope of the Victims' Assistance Act, the Compensation Fund and the Aid Fund. In return, Austria agreed to establish a fund endowed with six hundred million Schillings, with the help of the money provided by Germany. The resources of the "New Aid Fund" that was thus established were to be "made available as benefit payments for persons who had suffered occupational detriment or had been obliged to interrupt their university studies, who had been persistently persecuted for political reasons of whatever kind and had emigrated from Austria on account of that persecution, who had been Austrian citizens on 13th March 1938, and whose permanent place of residence was now in a foreign country".²⁵

The Federal Republic of Germany viewed Austria's line on the "compensation" question with a critical eye. In a small private meeting with Austrian ambassador, Josef Schöner, in autumn 1960, Konrad Adenauer, the West German Federal Chancellor did not mince words, when voicing his opinion: "the Austrians were quite impossible people, as was demonstrated particularly by the attitude they adopted after the War. After all, they were no less to blame for National Socialism than the Germans and in 1938 had gone along with it more enthusiastically than was normal in Germany at the time. After all, Mauthausen was located in Austria, and it was Austrian divisions that had blown up the dams in Holland. The Austrians were an uneducable people as was shown by their attitude towards the question of 'reparation', which could only be regarded as an indisputably clear-cut case. So far the Federal Republic [of Germany] had paid out more than four billions in reparations, Mr Raab not a single penny".²⁶ The ambassador reported back to his boss, Foreign Secretary Bruno Kreisky, in a top secret letter from Bonn.

In actual practice, those entitled to lodge claims experienced repeated setbacks and found the compensation processes to be riddled with dysfunctional inadequacies, which only began to be properly addressed three decades later. It was only in 1986, in the course of the "Waldheim debate", that a change in Austrian historical awareness set in. Renewed international pressure over compensation policy prompted the Republic of Austria to take further steps.

In 1995 the Republic of Austria Fund for Victims of National Socialism was established, followed in 2000 by the Reconciliation Fund, and the General Settlement Fund of 2001 – they came not least as responses to international political pressure on the 'black and blue' coalition in the new Federal Government [the coalition between the ÖVP and the FPÖ]. The new direction taken in compensation policy certainly made waves in Carinthia's rightist political circles: in a 2001 protest campaign, the Carinthian Homeland Service (KHD) took a stand against the "ever more outrageous claims for atonement, 56 years after the end of the War".²⁷ At the same time the KHD condemned the adoption of the all-too-familiar style of "American victims' organisations", which had so far prevented reconciliation with the Jews, because it prioritised "profit-seeking motives".²⁸ So, yet again, it seemed that Jewish compensation claims were to blame for the persistence of noisily expressed anti-Semitism. In their campaign against the "daily Nazi-baiting", "payments of billions to NS victims", "collective guilt and inherited kinship liability", the KHD of course omitted to mention the fact that the Republic of Austria's financial initiatives in favour of the NS victims were rather

modest in comparison with the material losses those victims had actually suffered. In fact the Republic of Austria had been far more generous towards former National Socialists. Their rehabilitation was to be effected not only through lenient criminal proceedings and far-reaching amnesties but also through substantial compensation payments – a circumstance that occasionally incurred the displeasure of Socialist Parliamentary Representatives. It seemed intolerable to Representative Karl Mark, for example, that “ousted National Socialists were compensated to the tune of 150 Schillings a month, over a period of many months, just for being idle and swanning around, whilst the victims of their system – whose beneficiaries they had been - lived in desperate misery”.²⁹

What’s more the ousted former National Socialists were granted entitlement to claim pensions, whilst at the same time (1950) an extension to the scope of the Victims’ Welfare Act was being rejected because of the budget situation. Likewise National Socialists who had been interned in the Glasenbach de-Nazification camp enjoyed compensation for wrongful imprisonment, whereas returnees from Shanghai still had to wait until 1961 for similar recognition of their internment in Hongkew ghetto. And whilst disadvantageous pension provisions continued to affect expelled Jewish men and women right up until the 1980s, pensions assessment certainly took account of periods of military service – even those of former SS members. The war criminal Walter Reder, no less, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for the mass-murder of the inhabitants of Marzabotto in Northern Italy, was awarded a pension with effect from 1967, whilst still being held in an Italian prison.³⁰

RESTITUTION

The return of stolen property was regulated by the seven Restitution Acts passed between 1946 and 1949. This legislation was not enacted on account of any Austrian consciousness of a need to redress injustice; rather it was once again a result of pressure from the occupying forces. They invoked the Allies’ London Declaration of 5th January 1943, which had prescribed the restoration of property confiscated by the National Socialists. The First Restitution Act of July 1946 covered confiscated property that was under the administration of Federal or Provincial agencies. The Second Restitution Act of February 1947 regulated the return of property that had come into the possession of the Republic of Austria in 1945, as a result of the National Socialism Prohibition Law as well as the 1945 War Criminals Act. The Third Restitution Act, which provoked particularly intense political controversy, was also passed in February 1947. It was of crucial importance for the aggrieved parties, because its provisions regulated the restitution of looted property that was in the hands of private persons.

The “Protection League for those Affected by Restitution Claims” was brought into being in summer 1948 as a direct reaction to the Third Restitution Act. Its free newsletter *Unser Recht* fought fiercely for the repeal of the Act over the following years. In this, it was supported by a forerunner of today’s FPÖ, and by the Association of Independents (VdU), whose core constituency was predominantly amongst the former National Socialists. One solution to the problem tried by the Council of Ministers was to ensure that no further extension to the stipulated period for making claims under the Third Restitution Act should be granted, thus causing the law to expire. Yet this first proposal failed in November 1948, in the face of strong international protest, and especially on account of American opposition.³¹ The Allies also raised objections against the governing parties’ planned introduction of a Hardship Fund in 1950, intended to alleviate the “hardship” suffered by former “Aryanisers” as a consequence of restitution legislation.³²

Austria's denial of any degree of co-responsibility for the crimes committed under the NS regime also manifests itself in the restitution dossiers – and according to a March 1947 survey, as much as seventy-one percent of the Austrian population endorsed this denial³³. The files clearly document the fact that, when it came to making the Restitution Acts work in practice, their enforcement was extremely slow and unsatisfactory. Before they could secure the return of property extorted from them, applicants and their legal heirs, who lodged restitution claims with the Austrian authorities, had to work their way through a tangle of complicated and expensive proceedings. It often proved scarcely possible to do this from abroad. To make matters worse, the burden of proof that an injustice had been committed fell upon the alleged victims, who for the most part no longer had the necessary deeds of ownership at their disposal. So restitution proceedings could turn into convoluted, protracted disputes, as former “Aryanisers” exploited the full letter of the law to avoid, or at least to delay, having to return illegally obtained property. Furthermore they commonly tried to reduce their financial liabilities, as they were entitled to claim back any expenditure they had incurred in relation to the former “Jewish property”.

Often the properties subject to restitution were suffering from neglect, in bad repair or mortgaged, so that they were of no great value to Jews living abroad and, once again, they needed to be sold on quickly. Restitution of Jewish property was in many respects also legally complicated: in Villach, for example, most Jewish businesses had been liquidated and no longer existed. Again, many of the former Jewish shops had operated from rented premises; and there were numerous cases where real estate properties or businesses were no longer owned by the original “Aryanisers” - who had obtained the assets at a knock-down price, merely with a view to reselling them for a quick profit.

In view of the gruelling legal proceedings many Jewish men and women found themselves forced to waive their restitution claims, or to strike unfavourable deals with the former “Aryanisers”, because they were in no position to pay the high costs involved.

In restitution proceedings, former “Aryanisers” also tried every means possible to prove that sales contracts had been entered into honestly, also claiming that the Jews had sold their property of their own free will. Again, others declared either that they had acquired the property in question to enable a persecuted Jew to flee, or to put a run-down Jewish business back on its feet again. In cases involving an illegal takeover of a business or of goods, the usual line of argument was that the goods that had been taken over were of very poor quality. These protestations were accompanied by the use of such expressions as “Pofelware” (bric-a-brac) and “Ramschware” (junk goods) – pejorative terms that had been used for decades in the context of Jew-baiting. Another commonly used argument was that a Jewish business had fallen on hard times and that the proprietor had already intended to sell up, even before the National Socialists had come to power.

If the Restitution Commission was once persuaded by these points of view, the aggrieved parties had only the slenderest of chances of seeing their restitution claims upheld, no matter how legitimate they were.

So restitution proceedings very often ended with a settlement, as often as not, out-of-court. Many former traders waived their right to submit a restitution application from the very outset, because of high litigation and settlement costs. For others, returning to Austria was out of question, so it would have made little sense to fight to regain a trading licence and tenancy rights for their expropriated businesses.³⁴

CASE STUDIES

Amalia Fischbach, née Schwarz

Amalia Fischbach, was the wife of a Villach retailer. She had acquired Obere Latscheinigkeusche at Oberjeserz 25 (address) in 1922 and was murdered in Auschwitz in 1942. What became of her property was described by the Villach notary entrusted with the restitution claim, Egon Weissberger. Because of his Jewish origins, Weissberger had himself fled from Austria and was one of the few returnees who now stood up for the victims' rights. In outline he recounted the expropriation process for the benefit of the Restitution Commission:

“In the staunchly Nazi municipality of Köstenberg they of course had an eye to taking her property from her. Josef Teppan, the former mayor of Köstenberg, was appointed ‘trustee for the sale of the Jew’s property’, and by a contract dated 14th April 1940 the property was sold to Valentin Koffu for the derisory purchase price of 2,208.78 RM.”³⁵

The application for restitution led to a first provisional-ruling of the court, under which on 4th April 1949 the property was returned to Amelia Fischbach’s sons, Leopold and Josef, then living in America. However, Theresia Koffu lodged a legal appeal against the ruling. Her line of argument was that she and her subsequently deceased husband had acquired the “Jewish property” “honestly”, so that “compensation” would not be in order.

Furthermore, nobody had cared less “whether Amalia Fischbach was or was not a Jew, whether she had been subjected to any kind of political persecution under National Socialism, or whether she had left Austria because of this”. Theresia Koffu summarised: the municipality of Köstenberg had strenuously urged her to purchase this “desolate” property and in her opinion it would have been a bad deal under any terms.³⁶ Her submissions to the court betrayed not only a deficient sense of justice but anti-Semitic undertones too:

“With the values to which I have always held firm – justice, loyalty and good faith - how should I now find my way in the world, if property that I purchased by due legal process, were to be lost under the provisions of a law that was enacted at a later date? And how would it be if my adversary, benefitting from subsequent inflation, grew rich, whilst I had to suffer the loss?”³⁷

Elsa Blau

In a number of cases, former Jewish proprietors were unsuccessful in recovering their businesses, or getting their stolen goods replaced. One problem area, for example, was the restitution of homes or business premises that had been rented - because for a long time there was no specific legal provision in place here. In such cases the legal system worked to the disadvantage of the victims, because it subsequently legitimised the acts by which they had been deprived of their basic livelihood. When their claims were rejected, the Jewish applicants suffered double detriment, because they also had to pay costs. A case in point is that of the Villach entrepreneur Elsa Blau, who fought in vain for the restitution of the business premises of the shop, *Kaufhaus Elba*.

Originating from Pressburg, Leopold Blau had lived in Villach since as early as 1904. In 1910 in Ungareigen, (today’s Záhorská Ves) on the Marchfeld Plain of Slovakia, he married Elsa Rosenberg from Graz. A year later their son Walter was born in Villach³⁸, where his parents

had opened a general store at Weißbriachgasse 12 (street address). During the First World War the family temporarily moved to Vienna, where in 1923 they founded *Leder- und Stoffbekleidungsindustrie GmbH Elba* (*Elba leather and fabric garments company*), which subsequently opened an outlet subsidiary in Villach. The Production Workshop of the Association of War Invalids in Vienna and Lower Austria was successfully recruited as a partner. From 1929 Elsa Blau was the sole shareholder of the *Elba Company*, and her husband acted as manager of the Villach branch.

Just a few days after the “Anschluss” on 16th March 1938, *Elba’s* Villach subsidiary was shut down by the Gestapo, in the presence of a few members of the NSDAP. Leopold and Elsa Blau were immediately forced to leave the shop – of course not before they had handed over their keys and the contents of the cash tray. Elsa Blau dispassionately summarised how things were done in those days:

“We were not allowed to take anything with us and had to leave everything behind just as it was. My husband and I were considered full-Jews. For the time being I went to Vienna and then I was expelled to Czechoslovakia. My husband was deported to a concentration camp. We were forced out of the business by violent means, and I never received any damages or compensation.”³⁹

Within a few minutes the couple had been robbed of their property and financial livelihood, so they tried to raise cash from a “fire sale”. Prior to their forced departure for Vienna the two of them managed quickly to sell off a few personal effects, for example a sewing machine that went to their housekeeper.

On arrival in Vienna, they began to busy themselves looking for opportunities to escape, but in vain. Subsequently Elsa Blau was expelled to (what was then) Czechoslovakia and, after the National Socialist annexation of 1939, she managed to remain undiscovered in various places of concealment. Her husband Leopold was deported from Vienna to Theresienstadt on 28th June 1942, and from there on 23rd September 1942 to Treblinka extermination camp. He was not destined to survive Treblinka.

By that time the *Elba Company* had been out of business some while. In May 1938 Josef Horvath had been appointed “provisional administrator” for the shop. He was under instructions to liquidate the business, which he did at the beginning of November 1938: the stock was sold off, the shop was emptied and the keys returned to the owner of the building. Because of steadily mounting pressure, and in full awareness that he urgently needed to leave Villach, Leopold Blau had pre-empted the flood of lease cancellations that later overtook other Jewish tenants and had terminated the *Kaufhaus Elba* tenancy on his own initiative in the summer of 1938.

The premises that had thus become vacant were used as an office by the National Socialist Public Welfare Organisation (NSV) over the course of the next few months, before retailer Hans Samonig finally rented the vacant premises in September 1939 – the Villach Magistrate had shortly before issued him with a licence to sell textiles and footwear products.⁴⁰

When Elsa Blau eventually submitted her application for restitution of her property on 24th February 1948, it was rejected by the Restitution Commission because of the special circumstances, namely that Hans Samonig had not appropriated any goods but had only rented empty rooms. In addition he had had no direct business relations with the *Elba*

Company. On the basis of this ruling, the supplicant was also required to pay the costs incurred to date, amounting to 1,840 Schillings.⁴¹

An appeal lodged by Elsa Blau left her no further forward. It was rejected by the Higher Regional Court, with the additional justification that the company, *Elba GmbH*, had been the sole tenant of the premises and owner of the goods and fittings, and therefore no private individual was entitled to lay any claim on the property that had been seized. Furthermore, Leopold Blau's "voluntary" termination of the tenancy by was interpreted to Elsa Blau's disadvantage.⁴²

So, trying a second time, Elsa Blau applied to get the *Elba Company* re-established and hoped by this expedient to be able to mount a valid restitution claim. This meant running the bureaucratic gauntlet for a second time, because the *Elba Company* had been deleted from the commercial registers at the beginning of 1940.

Elsa Blau did not however just demand the restitution/compensation for the adaptations to the shop premises that she and her late husband had made, but more particularly she wanted compensatory payment for the stock, which had been purchased at giveaway prices by the Pöckau retailer, Rudolf Smoley. According to the records, he had flung the stock onto the back of a wagon, without bothering to package it up, in the autumn of 1938 and had transported it all to his shop. His "purchase"⁴³ consisted of 1,200 pairs of shoes, 800 metres of bed sheet linen, 250 men's and boys' suits, 100 dresses and 350 metres of cloth for women's and men's clothing. The sons of the now deceased Pöckau retailer subsequently described all of this as "Ramschware" (junk goods).⁴⁴ Friedrich Smoley used Elsa Blau's allegedly "unjust" and "outrageous" claims as a pretext for offering a legal opinion of his own:

"I too am an Austrian citizen and was in military service against my will for almost 10 years. I too can point to material detriment that I have suffered, but I can't lodge a claim on account of it today, either against the state or against any other person."⁴⁵

On 19th January 1951 Hans Samonig notified the Restitution Commission of Elsa Blau's demise. The proceedings were shelved.

Elsa Blau died on 12th December 1950 at the age of sixty-five in Murau/Styria, where she had also fought vigorously for the restitution of her stolen property, just as she had in her hometown of Villach. Since 1946 she had tried to secure compensation equivalent to the value of her sister Malvine's and her brother-in-law Adolf Humburger's property. All the indications are that both had been put to death in a concentration camp in Yugoslavia. In Murau, Elsa Blau managed to overcome the bureaucratic and legal obstacles and finally won restitution in respect of the confiscated property.⁴⁶ In Villach, her efforts were not to be met with the same success.

Josef Sternschuss

Josef Sternschuss was born on 28th November 1889, in Radautz, (today's Rădăuți in Romania). He was a member of a large family of merchants and, on account of his rebellious behaviour, he was taken out of primary school and taught privately. He also left grammar school for disciplinary reasons and attended the vocational school in Czernowitz. From the age of twenty, he was employed in technical roles by various companies in Romania, Poland and Hungary. In 1915 he joined the military as a volunteer, where he again made himself notorious for insubordination. In the second year of war Josef Sternschuss was discharged from military service because of a lung condition.

After the end of the First World War he was technical manager in a cement factory in Sofia for almost three years. He then went to Vienna to join his brother Max, a solicitor, who helped him find and purchase a suitable industrial business. In 1924 Josef Sternschuss eventually bought a 50% holding in the *Löwy & Co.* paper and cardboard factory in Obere Fellach near Villach. Three years later, in 1927, he also took over the company's remaining shares from his business partner Moritz Löwy and so became sole proprietor of the firm. Violations of labour law and a rough manner in dealing with his employees led to serious complaints from the Factory Inspectorate and the workforce alike – and these were not without anti-Semitic undertones. The *Arbeiterwille* described him as a “Balkan Jew”, who was trying “to bring in a Pasha style of management over here”.⁴⁷ In Obere Fellach Josef Sternschuss was commonly referred to as “the Jewish bastard”, and for the locals the idea of “Jew” was closely tied up with the image of the “martinet”.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, when Josef Sternschuss was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment in 1931, on charges of inducing witnesses to give false evidence and for health and safety violations, his employees feared for their jobs. The company would have been forced to close, had Sternschuss actually served his sentence. The convicted man's pleas for the prison sentence to be suspended were supported by the City of Villach, the Industrial Association, the Chamber of Commerce and the Carinthian Homeland Association under the leadership of Alois Maier-Kaibitsch. They all cited the significance of his business for the economy.

At the time, the company employed about twenty women and men, who worked both day and night shifts, except in the winter months. Despite the economic crisis, the cardboard factory was one of the few businesses that had not yet been obliged to stop production. At the end of 1934 a court ruling annulled Sternschuss' suspended prison sentence and the criminal proceedings against him were shelved. Thanks to a unique process that had been developed in-house, Sternschuss' factory was able to produce a special kind of cardboard. It was used by footwear manufacturers both in Austria and abroad and the main customer was *Albeko*, a Vienna-based Kommanditgesellschaft (limited liability partnership) in the footwear production industry. They had bought this product from Sternschuss over the course of many years and, in consequence, they knew all about the Villach company.

Immediately after the “Anschluss”, on 13th March 1938, Sternschuss was arrested and taken to the Villach police lock-up. At the beginning of April 1938, Albert Brinkmann, an authorised representative of *Albeko*, turned up at the jail to instigate sales negotiations over the factory site in Obere Fellach. Since the purchase price he offered fell far below the actual market value of the business - in the view of the prisoner - Sternschuss immediately rejected it out of hand, despite the predicament in which he found himself. However, in light of his hopeless situation and worn down by imprisonment, shortly afterwards his resistance finally gave way. Yet Brinkmann – taking full advantage of Sternschuss' situation – in the meantime declined to honour his original offer. After the company's debts had been paid off, he now wanted to take over the business without any money changing hands at all. This was rejected by Sternschuss, despite the threat of deportation to Dachau concentration camp. As a result he was “tortured in an inhumane manner”, according to the files, and eventually transferred to the Gestapo prison in Klagenfurt, where Gestapo official, Dr. Johann Bauer, again threatened him with being sent to Dachau, unless he was ready to hand over his business and “to disappear” immediately.⁴⁹

The cardboard factory had meanwhile become a pawn in the rivalries of various economic interest groups. The Villach NSDAP district leadership wanted to liquidate the enterprise.

Against this, the City of Villach, together with the Gestapo, wanted the business to remain a going-concern as the property of *Albeko*. Herbert Auer von Welsbach went to Vienna as a Representative of Carinthian Industry, for talks about the takeover of the Villach factory with August Ahlborn, Managing Director of *Albeko*. The timing meant that the meeting took place against the backdrop of the May Day celebrations, at which Auer von Welsbach was a keynote speaker. In his speech he frankly announced that any opponents of the NS regime would be obliterated “by the iron fist of the whole nation”.⁵⁰

In prison, Josef Sternschuss had certainly been feeling the Gestapo’s “iron fist”, as they put ever increasing pressure on him. Even Josef Bürckel, Reich Commissioner for the Reunification of Austria with the German Reich, involved himself personally in the affair. In a letter to the Klagenfurt Gestapo Office he insisted: “the factory is to be taken away from the Jew Sternschuss and to be handed over to ‘Albeko’ in consideration of its services to the Party (...). And to stop the Jew haggling, he is to be kept in prison pending his dispatch to the concentration camp”.⁵¹

Back in Vienna, August Ahlborn did not just intend to incorporate the supply-company into his business empire. He was also interested in getting details of the production processes for the “special” cardboard. Once again the Gestapo came to his assistance. On 2nd June 1938 Johann Bauer updated him on the current state of play:

“I have made provision that Sternschuss, who is due to be handed over to a concentration camp, should remain in protective custody in Klagenfurt for the time being. If it should prove necessary, I will do my utmost, using all available means, to ensure that in the end he divulges his company secrets, without of course committing myself unconditionally to being successful in this.”⁵²

As a reward for disclosing the “special” cardboard production process, the Gestapo promised Josef Sternschuss “chocolate, wine, sausage and freedom” – yet they only kept the first part of their bargain. When he asked the Gestapo functionary Johann Bauer to make good his promise of freedom, Sternschuss received a box around the ears.⁵³ A Gestapo resolution of 6th July 1938 finally confiscated Josef Sternschuss’s entire assets, in favour of the German Reich - and they were offered for sale to *Albeko*’s proprietors. After the Gestapo had assured the “Aryaniser” that debts claimed against Sternschuss under public law had been cancelled, August Ahlborn acquired the cardboard factory including the attached plot, a residential building and an automobile, for a price of 47,340 Reichsmarks.⁵⁴ Only a few days later, on 11th July 1938, legal ownership passed to the *Albeko* company. And so, deprived of all his property, Josef Sternschuss was deported to Dachau. On 26th September 1938 he was transferred to Buchenwald concentration camp, where he worked in a quarry, brutally abused by the guards.⁵⁵ The fact that Josef Sternschuss’s forthcoming deportation had long been public knowledge is demonstrated by a report in the *Kärntner Volkszeitung* dated June 1938:

“The Jew Josef Sternschuß, who is a former resident of the municipality of Obere Fellach near Villach, has run a special-cardboard factory since 1925. With the consent of the Villach district leadership of the NSDAP, Klagenfurt State Police carried out an inspection of the Sternschuß business, in the course of which a situation was discovered that appeared to require its immediate confiscation. [...] In the conduct of this case, the State Police has displayed great energy and taken drastic measures. The Jew is in protective custody and will

be sent to a concentration camp. There he will have the opportunity to reflect upon his past conduct and to make a study of working methods in the Third Reich. His property has been confiscated without further ado. Despite the outstanding debts amounting to S 80,000, a purely Aryan concern has been found that will run the company in the spirit of today's nation."⁵⁶

Many people had already made money out of the Sternschuss estate, even before its official confiscation by the Gestapo: *Albeko* had taken over the cardboard factory's warehouse stock, the Villach district leadership of the NSDAP had meanwhile cleared out Josef Sternschuss's house and taken possession of all the contents, including furniture, linen and his complete wardrobe of clothes. The detainee's radio was now in use at the Gestapo office.⁵⁷

In June 1939 Sternschuss was released from Buchenwald concentration camp. In September 1940 he managed to escape from the territory of the German Reich down the River Danube.

After an adventurous odyssey an illegal transport convoy of refugees consisting of several ships, eventually landed in Haifa harbour. The British authorities refused the refugees entry into Palestine and deported the majority of them to the tropical island of Mauritius, where they were interned in the former Beau Bassin prison from the end of December 1940 to August 1945. 1,560 Jewish refugees spent four-and-a-half years in prison-like conditions, on the British colonial island. After the War 1,060 out of the roughly 1,300 remaining internees decided to emigrate to Palestine; forty persons opted to return to Austria.⁵⁸ In the summer of 1945 the former refugees once more arrived in Haifa, where this time they were welcomed by representatives of Zionist organisations and brought to their appointed destinations. Thus it was that Josef Sternschuss moved to the environs of Tel Aviv. There in January 1948, he married Anna Marberger, who had already emigrated from Yugoslavia to Palestine some fourteen years before.

A few months earlier, in October 1947, Sternschuss had submitted his claim to the Restitution Commission, for the return of the cardboard factory and its associated property. The defendant, August Ahlborn, who was the majority shareholder in *Albeko*, at first tried to use delaying tactics. In his statement he pointed out that he had been a German citizen at the time when the Villach enterprise had been "Aryanised", and that, as specifically German property, the Allies had handed over *Albeko's* assets to be managed in trust by the Austrian Government. Moreover, as a private individual, he and *Albeko* were two different legal persons. In the Land Register *Albeko* appeared as the owner of the "Aryanised" cardboard factory, which meant that the idea of addressing a request for restitution of property to him personally was "inherently flawed". Ahlborn did not feel obliged to give back the factory in Obere Fellach because "anyway it had not been a factory but an ailing business going to rack and ruin", that would have needed to have been sold even without National Socialist involvement.⁵⁹ Ahlborn affirmed that he had only acquired the out-of-date and debt-ridden business under pressure from various NSDAP offices and the Gestapo. Besides, after a fire in January 1940, the business had been completely rebuilt to meet the most modern standards. Therefore the cardboard factory whose return was demanded by Sternschuss was no longer identical with the new plant, and so could no longer be reclaimed.

Outspoken personal defamation of Josef Sternschuss figured prominently in this line of defence and was particularly crass in character. Harking back to earlier confrontations, the slurs came readily to hand. In an allusion to the criminal proceedings against Sternschuss in

1931, Ahlborn attempted to show that the National Socialists' imprisonment and deportation of this "troublesome foreigner" with "his criminal, anti-social past" had had absolutely nothing to do with the sale of his business. The restitution applicant's "illustrative examples" of abuse at the hands of the Gestapo, also appeared to be completely fabricated - in the opinion of the "Aryaniser".⁶⁰

Ahlborn's lawyer, Dr. Friedrich Klauß of Villach, finally chose the same line of defence as almost all other "Aryanisers": he argued that rules of good faith in business transactions had been adhered to, and that the "seller" had been able to make a free decision, without coercion. The argument that the Jews themselves were responsible for their own predicament was not unusual. After all "one of them" had killed the NS diplomat, Ernst Eduard vom Rath in Paris.

According to Ahlborn and his proxy Albert Brinkmann, the meetings with Sternschuss in the jails at Villach and Klagenfurt had been for the sole purpose of trying to free their long-term business associate from Gestapo arrest. The supplicant's take on all this was, to say the least, somewhat different. In his restitution application Sternschuss recounted what he remembered of these earlier meetings: after he had begged Brinkmann with uplifted hands to intercede on his behalf with the Gestapo, *Albeko's* authorised representative had answered: "If it were up to me, I would requisition all wheeled vehicles, tie all the Jews to them and chuck the lot into the Danube."⁶¹

The Restitution Commission eventually issued a provisional ruling on 15th December 1949, under which the sales contract was annulled. It was further stated that rules covering transactions in good faith had not been observed and that Sternschuss would not have sold his factory, had the National Socialists not come to power; likewise, there was little ground for a presumption that the business had been heavily indebted.⁶² However Ahlborn's objections were upheld to the extent that the situation as regards the ownership of *Albeko* needed further examination. There was also a need to clarify how far August Ahlborn, as a "mere" shareholder in *Albeko*, could be held accountable for the deprivation of property that had occurred and how formerly German property should be legally handled.⁶³

To speed up the lengthy proceedings, Josef Sternschuss went to Vienna in February 1951, where - like so many others - he wanted to get an out-of-court settlement with his former business partners, even if it proved disadvantageous to himself. The *Karex-Schuhindustriedarfs GmbH* (shoe production supply-company) was hastily set up and Josef Sternschuss's claims on his former property were transferred to it. Sternschuss was partner/shareholder. Walter Ahlborn, August's brother and former co-partner at *Albeko* was installed as managing director of the new private limited company.

With this the Restitution proceedings moved towards their particularly absurd conclusion in February 1951: united in brotherly love, the two former "Aryanisers" negotiated a settlement between the *Karex* and *Albeko Companies*. Then the court ruled that the cardboard factory needed to be transferred to *Karex*, by way of restitution, and in turn *Karex* committed to pay *Albeko* a sum of 70,000 Schillings in respect of goods warehoused in Villach.⁶⁴

The currently available documents do not specify what severance payment Josef Sternschuss managed to secure for himself in his out-of-court settlement with Walter Ahlborn. However, it can be assumed that the agreement was not entirely to Josef Sternschuss's advantage. In 1956 he applied for support from the Aid Fund, because in Israel he could only keep his head above water with the help of financial assistance from his siblings and other close relatives. On 4th May 1957 the Villach factory owner died in Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv, at the age of sixty-eight.

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- ¹ Elvira Itzhaki interviewed by Werner Koroschitz and Alexandra Schmidt, Tel Aviv, 30th Sept 2013.
- ² Cited in Helga Embacher, *Neubeginn ohne Illusionen. Juden in Österreich nach 1945*, Vienna 1995, p. 81.
- ³ Brigitte Bailer, *Wiedergutmachung kein Thema. Österreich und die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, Vienna 1993, p. 135.
- ⁴ Cited in Albert Sternfeld, *Betrifft: Österreich. Von Österreich betroffen*, Vienna 1990, p. 19. Also see Peter Schwarz, *Tulln ist judenrein! Die Geschichte der Tullner Juden und ihr Schicksal von 1938 bis 1945: Verfolgung – Vertreibung – Vernichtung*, Vienna 1997, p. 334.
- ⁵ Memorandum of the State Chancellery, Foreign Affairs: Die außenpolitische und die völkerrechtliche Seite der Ersatzansprüche der jüdischen Naziopfer, Vienna, beginning of August 1945. Cited in Robert Knight (editor), *„Ich bin dafür, die Sache in die Länge zu ziehen.“ Die Wortprotokolle der österreichischen Bundesregierung von 1945 bis 1952 über die Entschädigung der Juden*, Frankfurt/Main 1988, p. 105.
- ⁶ *Ibidem*.
- ⁷ See Heimo Halbrainer/Gerald Lamprecht/Ursula Mindler, *Unsichtbar. NS-Herrschaft: Verfolgung und Widerstand in der Steiermark*, Graz 2008, pp. 147 ff.
- ⁸ Cited in Robert Knight (editor), *„Ich bin dafür, die Sache in die Länge zu ziehen“*, p. 44.
- ⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 197.
- ¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 196.
- ¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 197.
- ¹² See Brigitte Bailer, *Wiedergutmachung kein Thema*, p. 59.
- ¹³ Cited in Helga Embacher, *Neubeginn ohne Illusionen*, p. 137.
- ¹⁴ In March 1946, 208 Jews from Karaganda arrived in Vienna. They had originally escaped to the Baltic Republics, and from there to the Soviet Union. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union they were interned in camps in Central Asia and used as forced-labour. Among the returnees from the Soviet Union were also victims from the two Nisko transport trains in October 1939. Officially 1,584 Jews had been deported from Vienna to Poland to create a Jewish settlement there. Apart from 198 people who were allowed to return to Vienna, all others were herded across the Russian border. Everyone who did not get murdered or who did not fall into the hands of the German Wehrmacht at a later date was deported to a Siberian labour camp.
- ¹⁵ *Wiener Zeitung*, 12th Jan 1956. Cited in Dietmar Walch, *Die jüdischen Bemühungen um die materielle Wiedergutmachung durch die Republik Österreich (= publications by the Historical Institute/Salzburg University)*, Vienna 1971, p. 97.
- ¹⁶ See Brigitte Bailer, *Wiedergutmachung kein Thema*, pp.160 ff.
- ¹⁷ Cited in Brigitte Bailer, *„Alle haben gleich gelitten?“ Antisemitismus in der Auseinandersetzung um die sogenannte ‚Wiedergutmachung‘*; in: Jüdisches Museum der Stadt Wien (publisher), *Die Macht der Bilder. Antisemitische Vorurteile und Mythen*, Vienna 1995, pp. 333-345, here: p. 340.
- ¹⁸ *Kärntner Nachrichten*, 27th Jan 1956, p. 1.
- ¹⁹ Dr. Fritz Stüber was co-founder and Viennese chairman of the VdU. In 1953 he was expelled on account of “deviation from the party line”. Until June 1956 he served as an “independent” member of the National Council.
- ²⁰ *Kärntner Nachrichten*, 27th Jan 1956, p. 1.
- ²¹ *Wahrheit und Volkswille*, 19th Jan 1956, p. 1.
- ²² *Ibidem*, p. 2.
- ²³ *Kärntner Nachrichten*, 1st April 1961, p. 2.
- ²⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁵ Bundesgesetzblatt No. 178/1962. Cited in Brigitte Bailer, *Wiedergutmachung kein Thema*, p. 161.
- ²⁶ See Bruno Kreisky, *Im Strom der Politik. Der Memoiren, zweiter Teil*, Vienna 1988, p. 29.
- ²⁷ *Der Kärntner*, December 2001, p. 2.

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- ²⁸ *Der Kärntner*, April 2001, p. 3.
- ²⁹ Cited in Brigitte Bailer, *Wiedergutmachung kein Thema*, p. 32.
- ³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 268.
- ³¹ See Robert Knight, "Ich bin dafür, die Sache in die Länge zu ziehen", p. 51.
- ³² See Brigitte Bailer, *Wiedergutmachung kein Thema*, p. 64.
- ³³ Thomas Albrich, "Es gibt keine jüdische Frage". Zur Aufrechterhaltung des österreichischen Opfermythos, in: Werner Koroschitz/Lisa Retzl (eds.), "Heiss umfahdet, wild umstritten...". Geschichtsmythen in Rot-Weiß-Rot, Katalog zur gleichnamigen Ausstellung, Villach 2005, pp. 51-73, here: p. 52.
- ³⁴ See Albert Lichtblau, "Arisierungen", beschlagnahmte Vermögen, Rückstellungen und Entschädigungen in Salzburg. Vermögensentzug während der NS-Zeit sowie Rückstellungen und Entschädigungen seit 1945 in Österreich, edited by Clemens Jabloner/Brigitte Bailer-Galanda/Eva Blimlinger et al (= publications of the Austrian Historical Commission, Vol 17/2), Vienna 2004, pp.152 ff.
- ³⁵ Amalia Fischbach, represented in absentia, by Dr. Egon Weissberger, to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 22nd December 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 496/48, Sch. 45.
- ³⁶ Complaint by Theresia Koffu, (later Stotz), to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Velden, 28th April 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 496/48, Sch. 45.
- ³⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ³⁸ Israelite Religious Community Graz, Birth Register Entries, vol 1.
- ³⁹ Elsa Blau, Restitution Application, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 24th Feb 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 127/48, Sch. 22.
- ⁴⁰ Hans Samonig, Counter-Statement, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 23rd March 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 127/48, Sch. 22.
- ⁴¹ Finding of the Restitution Commission, at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 11th Nov 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 127/48, Sch. 22.
- ⁴² Decision by the Restitution Commission at the Higher Regional Court of Graz, Graz, 16th Dec 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 127/48, Sch. 22.
- ⁴³ Elsa Blau, Restitution Application, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Graz, 28th Nov 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 15/50, Sch. 53.
- ⁴⁴ Norbert Smoley to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Neuhaus, 6th June 1950. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 15/50, Sch. 53.
- ⁴⁵ Friedrich Smoley to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Pöckau, 7th June 1950. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 15/50, Sch. 53.
- ⁴⁶ See also Werner Koroschitz/Uli Vonbank-Schedler, *Kein schöner Land. NS-Opfer in Murau*, published by the Murau Town and Handicraft Museum, Klagenfurt 2012, pp. 42 ff.
- ⁴⁷ *Arbeiterwille*, 3rd Dec 1926, pp. 11.
- ⁴⁸ Josef Jost, interviewed by Werner Koroschitz, Obere Fellach, 11th March 1997.
- ⁴⁹ Josef Sternschuss, Restitution Application submitted to the Restitution Commission, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, 18th Oct 1947. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.
- ⁵⁰ *Freie Stimmen*, 1st May 1938, p. 1.
- ⁵¹ Josef Sternschuss, Restitution Application, KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.
- ⁵² Josef Sternschuss, Evidence submitted to the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, 11th Oct 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.
- ⁵³ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁴ August Ahlborn /*Albeko*, statement, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 7th June 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.
- ⁵⁵ Witness testimony, Sandor Weimann, Tel Aviv, 2nd Aug 1956. ÖStA, AdR Finanzen, Holdings 06/HF, 1763 Sternschuss Josef.

⁵⁶ *Kärntner Volkszeitung*, 11th June 1938, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Albert Brinkmann, Witness Statement, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 10th Jan 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.

⁵⁸ Geneviève Pitot, *Der Mauritius-Schekel. Geschichte der jüdischen Häftlinge auf der Insel Mauritius 1940–1945*, Berlin 2008, p. 228.

⁵⁹ August Ahlborn/*Albeko*, statement, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 7th June 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.

⁶⁰ August Ahlborn/*Albeko*, statement, Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Villach, 23rd Jan 1950. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.

⁶¹ Josef Sternschuss, evidence, submitted to the Restitution Commission, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, 11th Oct 1948. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.

⁶² Part-decision by the Restitution Commission, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 15th Dec 1949. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.

⁶³ Findings of the Restitution Commission at the Higher Regional Court of Graz, Graz, 31st May 1950. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.

⁶⁴ Part-decision by the Restitution Commission at Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, 27th Feb 1951. KLA, Provincial Court of Klagenfurt, RK 176/48, Sch. 24.

Werner Koroschitz

*Between a fresh start
and homelessness
From Villach via Tarvisio, to Eretz in Israel*

“I didn’t know what I should do now. An inner voice told me: now they have liberated you, but you are completely alone in the world. I no longer had anybody and didn’t know where to go. It was a beautiful day and a difficult day.”¹

With these words a woman described her feelings on being liberated from one of the more than forty external camps of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Complex. In fact behind the survivors’ initial elation and relief at liberation also lay a great sadness and grief: practically everyone had lost family members, relatives or friends, and “Aryanisers” and other beneficiaries of the System had firmly established themselves in what had formerly been the survivors’ flats and houses. Even for most of those Jewish refugees living in exile there was no question of returning to their old homeland, where they had been so humiliated, and robbed in such unprecedented fashion by their fellow citizens. Added to this was the psychological and physical suffering, with which they somehow had to come to terms.

Many hoped for a fresh start outside Europe and they wanted to get away from those sites of horror and from an environment that was still just as extreme in its anti-Semitism as it always had been. But where to go? Owing to restrictive immigration rules in the U.S.A and Palestine, under its British mandate, there was only a slim chance of being able legally to emigrate to those countries or even to others.

But there was of course the alternative of migrating to Palestine illegally – a scheme that would lead to one of Europe’s largest illegal refugee movements, and one in which Austria would play an important role as a transit country.

Because of its geographical and geopolitical position, Austria occupied a particularly significant place in the activities of “Brichah”, the Jewish aid organisation, (Brichah = Hebrew for ‘escape’). East European Jews reached Austria, with the organisation’s assistance, and from there travelled on to Italy, where the refugees were taken in hand by *Aliya Bet*, a Jewish underground organisation for illegal immigration into Palestine. On ships that were mostly completely overcrowded, they were either taken successfully to Israel, or intercepted and interned on Cyprus by British military patrols.

The Brichah escape network spanned a variety of European states, but the organisation also maintained close links with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, as well as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).

A valuable accomplice for these organisations in the Carinthian area turned out to be the “Jewish Brigade”, which from mid-May 1945 was tasked with controlling the stretch of the Italian border around Tarvisio. This “Brigade”, made up of soldiers from Palestine and England, had gone into action for the first time in spring 1945 and had fought in Italy as part of the British 8th Army, until the end of the war. In allocating border surveillance duties to this particular unit, the British had of course trusted the cat to keep the cream.²

The Allies freed around thirty thousand Jewish concentration camp inmates and forced-labourers held on Austrian territory.³ On 8th May 1945, the day of the German Reich’s capitulation, there was a total of some 1.65 million foreigners in Austria, most of them former forced-labourers, Prisoners of War and survivors of the concentration camps. But there were

also escaped fascists, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Cossacks and Yugoslavs.⁴ Responsibility for so-called Displaced Persons (DPs) was part of the Allies' remit. For UNRRA purposes, the term 'Displaced Person' referred to all escaped or deported nationals of the Allied countries found in the liberated areas; also included were non-Allied nationals who could be deemed to be the victims of the former war adversaries. After the end of the War the most urgently pressing task was to record and register DPs, along with providing camps to accommodate and care for them. By the end of May 1945 there were roughly 130,000 DPs in Carinthia, of whom about a quarter lived in the various camps.⁵

Immediately after the end of the War, there began a spontaneous return-migration of former forced-labourers and allied Prisoners of War, crossing the nearby Italian border. In the months that followed, the route from Carinthia to Northern Italy, by way of the Thörl Maglern border-crossing, was to be one of the main high-roads for Jewish DPs *en route* to Palestine. Owing to its geographical location, Villach became a centre for the movement of migrants in the British zone. Thousands of refugees had to be fed, accommodated and registered.

Several camps for the different nationalities and a repatriation office for foreigners had already been established in the city by 16th May.⁶ The Völkendorf camp accommodated a fluctuating number of between eighty and one-hundred-and-fifty Jewish concentration camp survivors, mostly of Polish origin.⁷

When on 29th May 1945 soldiers of the Jewish Brigade reconnoitred neighbouring Carinthia⁸, word of their presence spread quickly amongst the Jewish DPs. At first the Brigade predominantly looked after Jewish DPs in the immediate vicinity, especially Carinthia. Soon individual soldiers instigated targeted searches across all occupation zones in Austria and southern Germany, trying to make contact with survivors. The refugees smuggled into Italy by the Jewish Brigade were accommodated in an especially adapted former Prisoner of War camp in Pontebba. From there they were transferred to other Italian reception camps.

At the beginning of July 1946 the Brigade carried out its first large-scale operation in the U.S. zone. A transport convoy of one-thousand-six-hundred Jews from Ebensee to Italy was organised, with the support of the British authorities - although without their official permission. To accommodate the arriving Jews, hundreds of volunteers in Valbruna and Pontebba built two reception camps within just five days. The concentration camp survivors were looked after and guided by Brigade soldiers. The next major illegal transportation came from Salzburg. These were mostly survivors of Theresienstadt concentration camp, who immediately after being freed had first been taken to Salzburg by Jewish U.S. soldiers, before being transferred on to Italy with the help of the Jewish Brigade.⁹ Apart from these illegal large-scale transport operations, members of the Brigade also took care of Jewish DPs from right across Carinthia and - if that was what the DPs wanted - smuggled them across the frontier. This was by no means a routine matter; it was a rather risky undertaking, because they could expect the British authorities to order checks at any time.

An effective system was evolved in response to this threat at Völkendorf DP camp. To disguise the high numbers of inmates leaving the camp, each individual Jewish refugee was given a cover-name on arrival. As soon as this person left the camp, the cover-name was transferred to another refugee who was just arriving.¹⁰ In case of emergency the DPs were to receive precise instructions from the Jewish Brigade soldiers.¹¹

On 8th September 1945, during Jewish New Year, James Price, a representative of the American Joint Distribution Committee visited Völkendorf DP camp. According to his report, the situation in the camp, which accommodated about seventy Jewish men and women and

ten children, left much to be desired. They lived in wooden barracks, with twenty-five people to a room. They had hardly any clothing and their daily ration consisted of a plate of soup and three hundred and fifty grams of bread. The Jewish DPs also complained to Price that various key positions in the running of the camp were occupied by former Wehrmacht soldiers. Nathan Perlmutter, unofficial spokesperson for the Jewish camp community, handed over a letter written in Yiddish to the distinguished visitor, with the request that it be published. By this means it was hoped that public attention would be attracted to the unbearable situation in Völkendorf.

At the end of his visit, Price also received pleas to do something for those Jewish fellow-sufferers who were currently being held in the Villach police jail, because they had left the camp without authorisation. Among them was a youth who had been imprisoned despite his broken leg.¹² Apparently Price no longer had an opportunity to follow the matter up. The camp inmates themselves then appealed to the Villach public, though with little success. With a mixture of incomprehension and clear anti-Semitic undertones, the *Neue Zeit* (newspaper) reported on the demonstration:

“Yesterday 14 accused persons stood before the British military court in Villach. Together with another 26 Jews, they had made themselves conspicuous during the riot that took place in front of Villach Police Station in December [1945]. They were Jewish refugees who by use of force wanted to secure the release of another Jew being held in prison. Isak Novak, the ring-leader, was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment, the others to three months’ each. Three persons were acquitted.”¹³

In the first half of 1946, in addition to the approximately one-hundred-and-fifty Jews, there were also one-hundred-and-forty-seven Ukrainians and a hundred Poles in the camp.¹⁴ Amongst its concentration camp survivors, Völkendorf DP camp mainly accommodated Polish Jews, the majority of them textile workers from Łódź, most of whom were passionate Zionists wanting to get to Palestine. The camp inmates’ fear was omnipresent - especially fear of the non-Jewish inmates. On the one hand this was because of experiences in the concentration camps, but it was also attributable to the continual violent attacks on Jews.¹⁵ The fear was justified. In July 1946 a pogrom took place in Kielce/Poland, where forty-two Holocaust survivors were slain by the locals. There were also violent, anti-Jewish riots in other parts of Poland, resulting in a panic-like mass exodus of the remaining Jewish population towards the West. With the help of Brichah ten thousand of these newly persecuted Jews reached the American Zones of Occupation in Austria and West Germany, where they found temporary accommodation in various DP camps. The creation of specially designated “Jewish DP camps” was the Allied military authorities’ belated response to the particularly vulnerable situation of Jewish survivors. Another consideration was that it was becoming clear that war criminals could often be found mingling with the crowds of Jewish DPs. Between 1945 and 1955 a total of sixty Jewish DP camps were set up in Austria, mostly in the U.S. Zone.

The illegal activities of the Jewish Brigade, who had helped thousands of DPs cross the Italian border and had enabled them to make their longed-for escape to Palestine, had not, however, gone unnoticed by the British authorities. At the end of July 1946 the Brigade was transferred to Belgium.

In general terms, the Jewish escape movement lasted until the end of 1947; it subsequently stagnated. One factor was that in November 1947 the United Nations passed a resolution

partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab areas. But it was also the case that by then the majority of those Jews who were “willing to emigrate” had already been smuggled through Austria, to Italy or Palestine, with the help of Brichah. When the State of Israel was established in 1948 and the United States relaxed its immigration laws in 1950 a fresh chapter in the migration flow of Jewish refugees began.

Although Jewish DPs only represented a small proportion of all refugees accommodated in Austria, they became the butt of renewed anti-Semitic attacks – whether because of the accusation that they were better fed, or the suspicion that they were involved in black market dealings. At the political level it once more fell to Oskar Helmer, Minister of the Interior, to explain to the representatives of the Anglo-American Committee the real reason behind Austrian anti-Semitism: the preferential treatment of Jewish DPs aroused bitter resentment amongst starving Austrians.¹⁶

¹ Susanne Rolinek, *Auf dem Weg in ein neues Leben. Motive und Hintergründe der jüdischen Fluchtbewegung durch Salzburg 1945 bis 1955*, in: Salzburg. Geschichte und Politik (= Reports by the Dr. Hans Lechner Research Association, No. 3). Zur Geschichte des Lagers Puch, Salzburg 2001, pp. 28-37, here: p. 29.

² See Thomas Albrich, *Exodus durch Österreich. Die jüdischen Flüchtlinge 1945–1948*, Innsbruck 1987, p. 22.

³ See Susanne Rolinek, *Jüdische Lebenswelten 1945–1955. Flüchtlinge in der amerikanischen Zone Österreichs*, Innsbruck 2007, p. 29.

⁴ See Thomas Albrich, *Exodus durch Österreich*, p. 12.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁷ American Joint Distribution Committee / DPs Division, Report: Visit to Völkendorf Camp, Villach, 8th Sept 1945. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, AR 4564/161.

⁸ Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah. The organized escape of the Jewish survivors of Eastern Europe, 1944–1948*, New York 1970, p. 64.

⁹ See Thomas Albrich, *Exodus durch Österreich*, pp. 22 f.

¹⁰ Hy Adams, interviewed in New York, 8th April 1996. Visual History Archive Online of the USC Shoah Foundation, at: <http://sfi.usc.edu>.

¹¹ Herschel Balter, interviewed in Caulfield (Australia), 24th Aug 1997. Visual History Archive Online of the USC Shoah Foundation, at: <http://sfi.usc.edu>.

¹² American Joint Distribution Committee, Report: Visit to Völkendorf Camp, Villach, 8th Sept 1945.

¹³ *Die Neue Zeit*, 23rd Jan 1946, p. 3.

¹⁴ Camp Reports, Investigation Report on Jews, 21st May 1946. National Archives, London, FO 1020/2836.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ See Thomas Albrich, *Exodus durch Österreich*, p. 193.

Postscript
Surviving after the Shoah
Observations on long-term psychological
effects on the survivors and their descendants

Many of the survivors of the Shoah never spoke about their traumatising experiences. The reasons for their silence are various and multi-faceted. What psychologists call post-traumatic avoidance, was for many of them a readily available form of self-protection. It meant that they did not need to be overwhelmed by boundless pain, unspeakable grief or immeasurable aggression. In this context, saying nothing or falling silent were, then, necessary survival strategies. However these could not remain without consequences, either for the persons immediately concerned or for their first and second generation descendants. Apart from self-protection, in many cases what lay behind the silence was the need to protect the descendants. Many just did not want to inflict on their children the horrors of their own past or the terrible reality that they had lived through – they wanted to protect the children better than they had been protected themselves. In some cases silence represented an expression of a continuing fear, and then again in others it was a consciously chosen attitude – frequently out of consideration for others, in order to spare fellow human beings, or because experience had taught them that, for many complex reasons, the articulated memories of the survivors were unwelcome in the various successor states to the German Reich. This latter consideration especially induced more than a few of them to persist in their silence sometimes for decades - and sometimes forever. In almost all western European countries after the War, the populace rushed headlong into an almost manic reconstruction. In their absorption, they betrayed a total lack of interest in the sufferings of the persecuted - there was a general failure in feelings of solidarity and compassion.

The tide was running in quite the opposite direction. It was noticeable how in Austria and Germany former National Socialists, with the help of political parties and other networks, once more managed to attain to the very highest socially important positions. Added to this, proceedings against war criminals in Austria from 1948 onwards almost always ended with acquittals and at the beginning of the 1960s prosecutions of alleged offenders virtually ceased. In exactly the same period, the survivors of the Nazi terror struggled through humiliating proceedings seeking compensation and restitution of their stolen property. As a rule, it is not the case that traumatising ceases as soon as persecution stops. Rather it is relieved only when the traumatised persons are again able to muster and rebuild their confidence in interpersonal and social relationships. One can imagine, then, just how unfavourable were the prevailing conditions for the survivors in the early years of the Second Republic. Acknowledgments of culpability, reparations, punishment of the former culprits – all necessary preconditions for overcoming trauma - were completely lacking. Moreover the anti-Semitic pogroms had not come to an end after liberation by the Allies. In Poland Jews were victims of mass murders until 1947, and to the present day a re-appearance of anti-Semitism has remained a serious threat in many European states, and in some cases it is even embedded as a basic political constant. In summary – and viewing the big picture - we can safely say that Jewish survivors never quite experienced that feeling of relief: “thank goodness it’s all over”. After they were freed, they had even less of a homeland than they had had before – a significant difference from other survivor groups who in many cases still

did have some kind of “home” to go to, or at least some social structures upon which they could fall back.

“Here they come again, such a pity that they didn’t murder them all.” A female patient remembered hearing these words when in 1945, as a young concentration camp survivor, she arrived at Vienna’s Südbahnhof (railway station), after a long, difficult and dangerous return journey.

The German-Dutch psychoanalyst Hans Alex Keilson (1909–2011) pointed out, in his ground-breaking work on the survivors of the Shoah published as early as 1979, that traumatisation had proceeded in three stages. The first involved the initial Nazi terror campaign; the second consisted of direct and immediate persecution, namely detention in the camps or concealment in hiding places – and the third stage covered the post-War period.¹

The question how those concerned were identified, dealt with and supported after the War was absolutely crucial for the way in which they coped with their trauma. Since support from social and political agencies was not forthcoming – neither in Germany nor in Austria - the survivors depended on building up *ad hoc* self-help structures. Only those who had the good fortune to find surviving family-members, or who were supported by other parties, had a chance of genuinely coming to terms with their post-traumatic symptoms.

We are still living in that “third stage”, the post-War period, where – almost seventy years on – state institutions are only hesitantly accepting their political responsibilities. And so, many survivors and their descendants are still trapped in their traumatic situation. Particularly where there are powerful groups and parties with nationalist agendas, as is the case in Carinthia for example, many of those affected find themselves in a seriously difficult situation that often becomes increasingly intolerable as they grow older. In the first years after the end of the War, a kind of individual triumphalist feeling of having survived very often helped people develop the toughness and resilience required to tackle the task of building themselves a new life. Yet as they grew older this feeling faded noticeably and was replaced by a recognition of their own frailty and mortality.

What is a normal social experience for all old people, namely the loss of contemporaries, friends and relatives, was something doubly devastating for those who never overcame the trauma of parting during the Shoah. Aging of itself is a parting process: taking leave of vitality, of the future and of health. For people who have experienced a traumatic loss, aging therefore becomes a massive burden. Feelings of helplessness evoke a renewed rage or despair. The fear of death in old age transforms itself into a real, objective fear of the same kind as the survivors experienced at the time of their persecution. Not infrequently old, untreated traumas re-emerge in later life, after a long latent phase.² In addition many suffered from a so-called “survivor guilt”, which expressed itself in feelings of guilt towards those who were murdered. Recurrence of trauma in later life is usually accompanied by various kinds of anxiety and a range of psychosomatic reactions. Among the widespread symptoms are: nightmares, flashbacks, lapses of concentration, difficulties in controlling aggression, depression, refusing to work through normal mourning processes, an inarticulate feeling of otherness, social contact problems and sexual disorders.

In this context it needs to be noted that significant differences in traumatic symptoms and processes can be recognised in those cases where the survivors were adults when liberated in May 1945, as compared with the cases where survivors were still under-age. The older, grown-up survivors already had a “previous” life – an experience that gave them a certain sense of order and security even after 1945. By contrast, deported children, the so-called

“child survivors”, could hardly fall back upon such psycho-dynamic support-mechanisms. They had been separated from their closest relatives at an age when they were particularly vulnerable. And after the War hardly any of them came back to their own protective family environment; only a fifth of child survivors returned home to their father and mother, that is, to both parents.

Of course the traumas left behind amongst the survivors were not restricted to the generation that had directly experienced the Shoah for itself. They also affected the next generation and indeed the one after that.

The survivors’ children were often the main carers for their afflicted parents, who in turn were unable to fulfil their parental role adequately, because of the damage they had suffered. The psychological term for this role-reversal is ‘parentification’. It always involves the loss of clearly allocated functions and stable identity for the persons concerned. The unspoken, but fundamental watchword in survivor families was that unpleasant matters should be passed over in silence. And so, perhaps paradoxically, silence often became a conspicuous feature of family communications. Since children invariably fill silences with frightening fantasies of their own, it was not only the horrors that were actually talked about that produced a traumatising effect on them; so too did their parents’ silences. Especially in cases where children were regarded as “substitutes” and as compensations for murdered family-members (as so-called “remembrance candles”), this became a particularly difficult legacy for the offspring, often leaving them with severe identity problems of their own. Very often traumatised people find compensation via “achievement motivation” and “intellectualisation”. Where this applied in the case of the survivors, their children often experienced only little by way of genuine affective bond with them. So, despite all the inward, emotional entanglements, frequently these kinds of parent-child relationships remained outwardly chilly and distant.

This in turn left its mark on the children’s later personal relationships. This second generation frequently had (has) to struggle with an inability to form attachments, or with life-long difficulties in breaking away from the parental home. Consequently members of this generation were (are) liable to develop symptoms similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorder, without ever directly being Shoah victims themselves – typical symptoms are propensity towards over-anxiety, nervous disorders and depression. Furthermore, in view of the immense suffering of the parents’ generation, their own afflictions were (are) not taken seriously, either at all, or at least only very late in the day. With the question “What is this, compared to what my parents had to go through?” lurking in the back of their minds, they often decline(d) to seek professional help, only increasing their levels of psychological stress.

It is noticeable that these kinds of effect are more prominent amongst the children of survivors who lived through persecution with a sense of their own powerlessness, than amongst those whose parents had been in the Resistance, or who had still been able to develop a feeling of their own autonomy.

Of course this pattern also stretches to the families’ third generation. By this stage, however, the generation gap from the grandparents is larger and third generation descendants are less shy about asking questions - so breaking the silence. Because of its present-day topicality the question of the differences between second and third generation descendants is currently the focus of intensive research.

In 1994 the Psycho-Social Centre ESRA was founded in Vienna in co-operation between the Israelite Religious Community and the City of Vienna. Its original purpose was to provide

medical, therapeutic, psychological, nursing and social-work care for Shoah victims. Apart from Jewish survivors and their descendants, it was also to care for other victims of the Nazi terror (persecuted political dissidents, Roma, Sinti, homosexuals and others). In the intervening years ESRA has further committed to providing assistance not just to the survivors of the Nazi era, but to all human beings who have been traumatised by persecution, torture, migration, maltreatment and other extreme incidents.

¹ See Hans Alex Keilson, *Sequentielle Traumatisierung bei Kindern* (= Forum der Psychiatrie. New Issue 5, edited by Johann Glatzel, Helmut Krüger and Christian Scharfetter), Stuttgart 1979, pp.61 ff.

² See Traude Tauber/David Vyssoki, *Alt gewordene Überlebende des Holocaust*, in: *Zeitschrift für Psychotherapie im Alter* (= Forum für Psychotherapie, Psychiatrie, Psychosomatik und Beratung Periodical 3), 2004, pp. 19-26.

List of abbreviations

AdR : Archive of the Republic of Austria
AKL : Office of the Provincial Government of Carinthia
AV : Alpine Association
AVA : General Administration Archive
BH : District Authority
BjF : Union of Jewish Front-Line Soldiers
BMF : Federal Ministry of Finance
BMUKK : Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
CA : Creditanstalt Bankverein (Bank)
DAF : German Labour Front
DDSG : Danube Steamship Company
DNSAP : German National Socialist Labour Party
DÖW : Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance Movement
DP : Displaced Persons
DuOeAV : German and Austrian Alpine Association
Fasz. : Fascicle
FLD : Provincial Finance Authority
FO : Foreign Office
FPÖ : Austrian Freedom Party
Gestapo : Secret State Police
HF : Aid Fund
HJ : Hitler Youth
IKG : Israelite Religious Community
ITS : International Tracing Service
JUVA : Jewish Property Tax
KHD : Carinthian Homeland Service
KLA : Klagenfurt Provincial Archive
KPÖ : Austrian Communist Party
KZ : Concentration Camp
LG : Provincial Court
NHF : New Aid Fund
NKWD : Narodny kommissariat wnutrennich del (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
NS : National Socialism (National Socialist)
NSBO : National Socialist Workplace Organisation
NSDAP : National Socialist German Workers Party
NSV : National Socialist People's Welfare
MDÖAV : Communications of the German and Austrian Alpine Association
OeAV : Austrian Alpine Association
ÖCW : Austrian Chemical Works
ÖGB : Austrian Federation of Trade Unions
ÖStA : Austrian State Archives
ÖTB : Austrian Gymnastics Association
ÖTK : Austrian Tourist Association
ÖVP : Austrian People's Party
OSE : Organisation Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants
RK : Restitution Commission
M : Reichsmark
SA : Sturmabteilung (Storm Detachment)
Sch. : Box
SDAP : Social Democrat Labour Party

SHS : Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia
SPÖ : Austrian Social Democrat (Socialist) Party
SS : Schutzstaffel
StLA : Styrian Provincial Archives
UNO : United Nations Organisation
UNRRA : United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USC : University of Southern California
VA : Declaration of Property
VdU : Association of Independents
VIA : Association for Industrial Culture and the History of Everyday Life,
VG : (Austrian) People's Court
Vr : Proceeding
VVSt : Property Transaction Office
WIZO : Women's International Zionist Organisation
Zit. : Cited
Zl. : Number
ZV : Central Association's Files

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