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National Socialism in Austria before and after 1945

Nazi Minister Anton Reinthaller and the
Origins of the Austrian Freedom Party

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TRANSLATION BY SINÉAD CROWE

After 1949, many former Austrian National Socialists reorganized in the Federation of Independents (VdU, *Verband der Unabhängigen*) and its successor party, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*). As the first party leader of the FPÖ beginning in 1955/56, Anton Reinthaller (1895–1958) played a central role in the postwar political mobilization of former National Socialists, known in Austria as the *Ehemaligen* (formers). On the basis of the hitherto unused personal papers of Anton Reinthaller, Margit Reiter's contribution sketches the political career of the founder of the FPÖ from his time as a member of the illegal National Socialist Party during the era of Austrofascism, through his appointment as a Nazi minister in 1938 and to various other positions during the Nazi period, to his postwar denazification and reentry into politics. The correspondence, personal notes, and court documents contained in his papers not only provide a good overview of the networks and the discourse among former Nazis after 1945, but also allow for an investigation into Reinthaller's attitude towards National Socialism and his retrospective self-presentation in front of the denazification court. The early history of the FPÖ is analyzed by interweaving party history with a biographical approach. In its tension between biographical and ideological continuities, on the one hand, and a willingness and ability to adapt to changed political circumstances, on the other, the example of Anton Reinthaller reveals a typical "Austrian" perpetrator biography of a sort that has been neglected in historical research.

Introduction

The Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*) was officially established on April 7, 1956, by Anton Reinthaller, a former high-ranking Nazi.¹ At the time Reinthaller, who also became the party's first chairman, was a national rallying figure for Austria's former Nazis. The FPÖ emerged from and supplanted the Federation of Independents (VdU, *Verband der Unabhängigen*), a party that had held seats in parliament since 1949 and had widely been regarded as a hotbed of former Nazis. Indeed, as I will demonstrate, contemporary observers believed that the new party, often

referred to as “Reinthaller’s Nazi party,” was run by “a small coterie of right-wing extremists and Nazi leaders” who had seized power from the VdU leadership.² These criticisms were leveled not at some small postwar right-wing faction, but at one of the main parties in the Austrian Parliament of the Second Republic, a party that continues to play a defining role in Austrian domestic politics today.

The FPÖ’s ties to National Socialism came under increased scrutiny after it became the governing party in late 2017. In early 2018 it emerged that leading FPÖ figures were members of German nationalist *Burschenschaften* (fraternities) that used songbooks with antisemitic content. In the wake of the scandal, one of the FPÖ’s top election candidates was forced to step down (albeit temporarily), and the party’s chairman, Heinz-Christian Strache, announced that an internal commission would be established to investigate the FPÖ’s past. However, this “historical commission” was criticized by historians for its lack of transparency and highly selective research questions.³ The final report of the commission was presented to the public at the end of 2019 after several delays, but it contained no new factual information.⁴

It is common knowledge in Austria that numerous former Nazis were politically active in both the FPÖ and its predecessor party, the VdU. This makes it all the more surprising that so little is known by historians, and therefore by the general public, about the specific circumstances under which the *Ehemaligen* (formers, i.e. former National Socialists, somewhat of a misnomer given that these individuals were still fervently committed to Nazism) found a political home within the Freedom Party. Most publications about the early history of the VdU and the FPÖ offer sympathetic, exculpatory accounts—hardly surprising, given that their authors are affiliated with the latter party.⁵ These works are to be approached with skepticism, as are the memoirs written by figures who were involved in the parties in their early days.⁶ In such publications, the continuities with Nazism are either ignored or greatly played down.⁷ While a large number of critical studies have been published on the later FPÖ from its time under the leadership of Jörg Haider and afterwards, no source-based research has been conducted into Nazi continuities—in terms of both membership and ideology—in the early FPÖ. Furthermore, no detailed biography of Reinthaller, the party’s first chairman, has yet been published; at present, all that exist are some short profiles of the politician written from the FPÖ’s perspective⁸ and brief accounts of certain phases of his career.⁹ As a result, in both academic and public discourse the Nazi “multifunctionary” and founder of one of the Second Republic’s main parties remains a largely unknown quantity.

My book, *Die Ehemaligen. Der Nationalsozialismus und die Anfänge der*

FPÖ (“The Formers: National Socialism and the Beginnings of the FPÖ”), published in 2019, has filled this gap. Drawing on my book and some of my other previous studies,¹⁰ I will examine the prehistory and beginnings of the FPÖ, focusing on Anton Reinthaller and his role in organizing the *Ehemaligen* into a political force. I will begin by outlining the political framework and limitations imposed on Nazis who were subject to denazification in post-war Austria. I will follow this with a quick overview of the emergence of the VdU (which can also be read as a prehistory of the FPÖ) before focusing on the political career of Reinthaller, who was active in three successive political systems. Who was Anton Reinthaller, and how did his career as a Nazi develop prior to and after 1938? What form did his political life take after 1945, and what was his status within the *Ehemaligen* milieu? Although it was impossible to access some historical sources,¹¹ Reinthaller’s papers, which have not yet been catalogued, have allowed me to trace the FPÖ founder’s political career from his time as an illegal Nazi during the Austrofascist regime through his appointment as a Nazi minister in 1938 to his activities after 1945. In addition to providing valuable insight into the discourse that dominated the *Ehemaligen* milieu and Reinthaller’s networks after 1945, Reinthaller’s letters and personal notes reveal a great deal about his attitude toward National Socialism and the image he sought to convey of himself in the postwar era.¹² In the final section of this article, I will examine Reinthaller’s central role in unifying the nationalist camp and establishing the FPÖ in 1955/56. I will combine the organizational history of the FPÖ with a biographical approach. My aims are to illuminate the key features of the party when it first emerged and to examine Reinthaller as a political actor, showing how he exemplified the “specifically Austrian” type of perpetrator that has largely been neglected by historians.

The Political Reorganization of the *Ehemaligen* after 1945

The year 1945 represented a new democratic dawn in Austria. The fundamental principles of the Second Republic included distancing itself from National Socialism, committing to an independent Austria, and establishing a democratic political order. The Social Democrats and Christian Socialists, who had been bitter opponents during the Austrofascist era, resolved to put aside their political differences in order to tackle Austria’s democratic reconstruction. Members of the former Christian Social Party (*Christlichsoziale Partei Österreichs*) founded the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP, *Österreichische Volkspartei*); many in the ÖVP leadership had been *Christlichsoziale* before 1938. After the first free elections in November 1945, the two main parties—the conservative ÖVP

and the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ, *Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*)—formed a coalition that would have a defining influence on Austrian politics in the years that followed.

The legal framework for denazification was established soon after the war ended. Firstly, the *Verbotsgesetz* (Prohibition Act) ordered the immediate dissolution of the Nazi Party, the repeal of all Nazi laws, the prohibition of Nazi activities, and the removal of the Nazi political elite from key governmental and industrial positions.¹³ Secondly, the *Kriegsverbrechergesetz* (KVG, War Criminals Act) provided a basis for the prosecution of Nazi crimes.¹⁴ The *Verbotsgesetz* required that all former Nazi Party members be registered, and it mandated a graduated series of punitive measures and sanctions to be handed down by special courts known as *Völksgerichte* (people's courts). Unlike in Germany, the government in Austria was responsible for denazification procedures from a very early stage. The main criterion for selecting individuals for denazification was the date on which they had joined the Nazi Party.¹⁵ “Illegals”—that is, the approximately 100,000 Austrian Nazis who had joined the party before 1938 and had continued to be politically active after its prohibition in 1933—received particularly severe punishment. The *Entnazifizierungsgesetz* (Denazification Act) of 1947 replaced this “joining date” criterion with the categories *belastet* (offender) and *minderbelastet* (lesser offender), but a series of amnesties from 1948 onward led to a drastic decline in the number of “offenders.” The sentences of most of these individuals expired in the early 1950s, or else they were granted pardons. Denazification ended in Austria in 1957.

Staunch Nazis reacted in different ways to the end of the war in 1945, which they viewed as catastrophic. High-ranking Nazi functionaries and members of the SS, SA, and Gestapo, in particular, had to assume that they were on Allied wanted lists and that they would not go unpunished. Numerous Nazi criminals, including Adolf Eichmann, Franz Stangl, and Alois Brunner, escaped prosecution by fleeing the country or changing their identities.¹⁶ As the war was ending, many Nazi functionaries in eastern Austria, fearing the Soviet army, decamped to the American Zone of Occupation in western Austria, where the *Ehemaligen* would politically regroup in a few years' time. The Allies, invoking the policy of “automatic arrest,” interned some former Nazi functionaries in two large camps: Camp Marcus W. Orr in Salzburg (also known as Camp Glasenbach), which was run by American occupation forces, and a British camp in Wolfsberg, Carinthia.¹⁷

These specific postwar experiences fostered a powerful sense of identity among former Nazis, who after 1945 formed an unwavering community

based on shared memory and political outlook.¹⁸ These *Ehemaligen* had espoused Nazi ideology and actively supported the Nazi system. Most importantly, they largely remained true to their convictions even after 1945.¹⁹ The *Ehemaligen* often moved in a male-dominated social and political milieu where they developed a counter-narrative to the official historical narrative.²⁰ They vehemently rejected the *Opferthese* (victim theory), according to which Austria was “Hitler’s first victim,” and the externalization of Nazism. For the *Ehemaligen*, these narratives, which would dominate Austrian discussions of the past for decades, did not reflect their own experiences and beliefs before and after the Anschluss of 1938. They did not see themselves as “victims” of Nazism at all; any sense of victimhood they felt was related to the time after the “collapse”. They lamented their loss of powerful positions and social prestige, viewing themselves as “victims” of denazification. Ultimately, such laments blended in with a widespread sense of “collective victimhood” in Austria at the time. The *Ehemaligen* milieu formed the basis, in terms of both membership and ideology, for the later FPÖ, which would serve as the political representative of this nationalist core clientele.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, however, political reorganization was out of the question. While some once-staunch Nazis withdrew in disappointment into political abstention (for the moment), others adapted relatively quickly to the new reality, finding a new political home in one of the two main parties, the ÖVP and the SPÖ.²¹ But many of the *Ehemaligen* scorned such pliant “opportunists” and sought to create their own political formations. Initial attempts to reorganize themselves into small right-wing parties such as the *Verfassungstreue Vereinigung* (Association Loyal to the Constitution), which was founded in 1947, were unsuccessful.²² In the late 1940s, new plans were made for a national “fourth party.” This new party saw itself as an alternative to the two dominant parties, the ÖVP and the SPÖ, and as a right-wing counterweight to the anti-fascist, politically insignificant Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ, *Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*), which held seats in the Austrian parliament until 1959. Influential business and media figures in Salzburg supported the creation of a new party, most notably the journalist Herbert Kraus, who had already explored the potential of a “fourth party” in his journal, *Berichte und Informationen*.²³ In the spring of 1949, half a year before the general elections, Kraus and his political ally Viktor Reimann founded the Electoral League of Independents (WdU, *Wahlverband der Unabhängigen*; also known as the VdU).²⁴ The new party saw itself firstly as a counterbalance to the ÖVP–SPÖ grand coalition and secondly as a strong advocate for former Nazis who had been subject to denazification.²⁵ The

VdU wanted to “put the past firmly in the past” and integrate Nazis, whom it presented as victimized and “disenfranchised,” into the democratic process.²⁶ The general elections of October 1949 revealed that the VdU’s promises appealed to this group. Though Nazis were vigorously courted by all the parties in the lead-up to this election, the first in which Nazis were allowed to vote again, the VdU received 11.7 percent of the vote, gaining sixteen seats in the Austrian parliament.²⁷

The new party was heterogeneous with regard to membership and ideology. In addition to its founders, Kraus and Reimann, who were regarded as “liberals” and opponents of Nazism,²⁸ and a few economic liberals and conservative monarchists, the VdU included several “nationalists” in various forms and from various backgrounds: German nationalist politicians from the old *Landbund* (Rural Federation) and the *Großdeutsche Volkspartei* (Greater German People’s Party), several former Nazi functionaries who had been classified as “lesser offenders,” and *Heimkehrer* (repatriated prisoners of war and internees) and *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans), who now lacked a political home. The party’s rhetorical attempts to distance itself from National Socialism could not disguise the fact that the VdU—and later the FPÖ—harbored numerous “incriminated” Nazis.²⁹

The inherent conflicts within the VdU erupted soon after it entered parliament and eroded the party’s already very fragile internal power structure. The VdU was almost banned after a series of scandals centering on individual functionaries’ “neo-Nazi activities.”³⁰ When the party suffered painful losses in the 1953 election, nationalist factions became more critical of the leadership, which they viewed as too conformist.³¹ Disgruntled and increasingly self-confident “nationalists” within and beyond the VdU began to congregate around the former Nazi minister Anton Reinthaller, who was rapidly becoming a national rallying figure for the *Ehemaligen* since receiving his pardon in 1953.

Anton Reinthaller’s Nazi Career before and after the Anschluss of 1938

Anton Reinthaller was born on April 14, 1895, in Mettmach, Upper Austria. The son of a farmer and small brewery owner, he served as a soldier in the First World War until he was captured by the Russian army in 1916. He was interned as a prisoner of war until 1918. After the war, Reinthaller studied forestry at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna, earning a degree in forest engineering in 1922.³² During this time, he was a member

of a *Burschenschaft* called Akademische Landsmannschaft der Salzburger (Salzburgers' Academic Association). Reinthaller subsequently became a contract civil servant in the Upper Austrian regional government, in the Department of Torrent and Avalanche Control. In addition, he owned two farms in Upper Austria.

Reinthaller soon found a political place for himself in the interwar German nationalist/National Socialist milieu. When he joined the Nazi Party on April 23, 1928, he was given the low membership number 83,421, indicating that he was one of the earliest members of the party in Austria.³³ In 1924 he married Therese Ritzberger-Oehn, the daughter of a Greater German (i.e. supporting the integration of Austria into a "Greater Germany") politician and large farmer near Attersee. She had also joined the Nazi Party at an early point, receiving the membership number 86,299. In addition to leading the Attersee chapter of the Nazi Party, which he himself had founded, Reinthaller became Gauleiter of Upper Austria, joined the party's Austrian leadership, and served as a *Kreisleiter* (district leader) for propaganda, *Gauredner* (Gau speaker), and leader of the country's illegal Nazi farmers' organization, the *NS-Bauernschaft*.³⁴ The fact that Reinthaller now tends to be categorized as a "moderate" Nazi is largely due to his position in the years prior to 1938, when he belonged to a wing of the illegal Nazi Party that advocated an "evolutionary" approach. This approach rejected the use of violence to topple the Dollfuß/Schuschnigg regime; instead, it was argued that "staunch nationalists" should infiltrate the state apparatus and undermine the regime from the inside. Reinthaller therefore clashed with the far more radical Nazi leader Theo Habicht, who called for a violent seizure of power in Austria.³⁵ But although these two wings pursued different strategies, their ultimate objective was the same: to assume power and clear the way for the German annexation of Austria.

The Austrofascist government's ambivalent strategy for dealing with the Nazis wavered between "appeasement and confrontation."³⁶ On the one hand, it responded to increasing radicalization and Nazi terrorism with repressive measures, such as restricting freedom of movement and association, arresting and deporting prominent Nazis (including Habicht, who was deported to Bavaria), and banning the Nazi Party on June 19, 1933.³⁷ On the other hand, however, the government sought dialogue with "moderate" Nazis with the aim of quelling Nazi violence and quashing the illegal Nazi Party by means of the divide-and-conquer strategy.

After the Nazi Party was outlawed, Reinthaller—one of the few Party leaders who had not fled to Germany—emerged as an ideal mediator. He belonged

to a circle of notable German nationalists who were prepared to come to an arrangement with the Austrofascist regime, partly because they shared some ideological positions and partly because of their plot to infiltrate the regime. They hoped to thereby strengthen their position within the German nationalist camp and ultimately assume leadership of the Austrian Nazi Party.³⁸ As an agricultural functionary, Reinthaller had developed good contacts in the Christian Social Party and played a key role in several so-called initiatives to make peace between the Austrian Nazis and the Austrofascist regime.³⁹ He was first in contact with the then minister of education, Kurt Schuschnigg, in November 1933, but this attempt at rapprochement failed after the government made a series of arrests intended to serve as a deterrent.⁴⁰ Many illegal Nazis were interned in detention camps, including Reinthaller himself, who was held in a camp in Kaisersteinbruch from January 17 until April 21, 1934. Reinthaller's activities caused some contention within the party and led to his expulsion by his rival, Habicht, who was by now controlling the party from Munich. The grounds for Reinthaller's expulsion were that he had negotiated with the Dollfuß government "behind the back of the *Landesleitung* and in open repudiation of its policies" and that he had organized a "separatist movement" within the Austrian Nazi Party.⁴¹

Undeterred, Reinthaller resumed his negotiations with the government after his release, launching his eponymous Aktion Reinthaller (Reinthaller Initiative) in the summer of 1934. Joining Reinthaller in the talks were the former Greater German politicians Franz Langoth and Hermann Foppa, as well as Hermann Göring's brother-in-law, Franz Hueber, who would later serve as minister of justice in Arthur Seyß-Inquart's cabinet. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, whom Reinthaller had first met in the detention camp in Kaisersteinbruch and appointed as his "secretary" in 1934, was also involved in the negotiations.⁴² Representing the government in the talks were the chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuß, Schuschnigg, and the minister of trade, Friedrich Stockinger. The governor of Upper Austria, Heinrich Gleißner, and the Upper Austrian director of security and leader of the Upper Austrian home guard, Peter Revertera, both of whom Reinthaller knew personally, served as chief mediators.

Reinthaller was not involved in the July Putsch, the Nazi coup d'état attempt of July 25, 1934.⁴³ In fact, by Reinthaller's own account, he was caught completely by surprise, learning of the attempted putsch and the murder of Dollfuß while he was on a train to Germany for negotiations.⁴⁴ In the wake of the failed putsch, Hitler's Austrian policy shifted decisively toward an

evolutionary approach, which was supported by the newly appointed German ambassador to Austria, Franz von Papen.⁴⁵ With German support secured, Reinthaller's talks with Dollfuß's successor, Schuschnigg, resumed in the first half of August 1934. The Aktion Reinthaller proposed that the entire nationalist camp be subsumed within the Fatherland Front (VF, *Vaterländische Front*), which aimed to supersede all other parties in Austria. In addition, Reinthaller's plan called for an end to the persecution of Nazis and the immediate release of all imprisoned Nazis. "Nationalists" were to be integrated on all levels, admitted en bloc into the VF, and permitted to create their own paramilitary unit.⁴⁶ In return, it was promised that Nazi terror would end and that Germany would lift the Thousand Mark Fee (*Tausend-Mark-Sperre*).⁴⁷ Before being admitted into the VF, Nazis would have to pledge their loyalty to the state of Austria. Though Reinthaller and his allies were prepared to do this,⁴⁸ Chancellor Schuschnigg was not prepared to accept the Nazis' excessive demands. For him, this would have been tantamount to capitulation, and so he broke off the negotiations.⁴⁹

The Aktion Reinthaller had failed, but its creator soon launched other initiatives, this time concentrating on negotiations at the level of the federal states.⁵⁰ An initial willingness on both sides to compromise was shattered by a new wave of arrests in early March 1936. Reinthaller and Langoth were among those arrested, though they were released immediately owing to insufficient evidence. While Reinthaller was not involved in the Austrian government's July Agreement with Hitler of July 11, 1936,⁵¹ he welcomed it, as its key points—the lifting of the Thousand Mark Fee and the release of political prisoners—met his demands of 1934.⁵² By now, new actors such as Arthur Seyß-Inquart had moved into the foreground.⁵³ In July 1937 Seyß-Inquart officially invited Reinthaller to work for the government, giving him the task of incorporating the "national farming community into the occupational organization."⁵⁴

After 1945 Reinthaller tended to exaggerate the conflicts of the 1930s within the Nazi Party in Austria in order to present himself in a better light. But in fact these conflicts did him no harm. Having positioned himself on the "right" side by 1938, the industrious Nazi was rewarded with a ministerial position and a handsome career. In addition, his activities provided him with contacts that would turn out to be advantageous: Seyß-Inquart and Richard Walther Darré, both of whom he knew well, helped further his career under the Nazis, while his earlier governmental negotiating partners proved useful as witnesses for his defense after 1945.

The Anschluss gave Reinthaller his first major career boost, with the new-

ly appointed Chancellor Seyß-Inquart naming him minister of agriculture on March 11, 1938.⁵⁵ While Reinthaller later claimed that he had held this post for only two days,⁵⁶ he in fact survived the cabinet reshuffle that removed “moderate” figures from their posts the following day. On March 22, 1938, he swore his allegiance to Hitler. On March 13, 1938, Reinthaller attended a reception held by Heinrich Himmler at the Hotel Regina in Vienna and was admitted to the SS (membership number 292,775). A few months later, he was promoted to SS *Oberführer*, and in January 1941 he rose to the rank of SS *Brigadeführer*.⁵⁷

Reinthaller actively campaigned for a “yes” vote in the lead-up to the Anschluss referendum of April 10, 1938. A surviving audio recording of him speaking at a rally in Tyrol reveals that he was not a gifted orator, however.⁵⁸ In his speech Reinthaller concentrated on the agricultural sector, criticizing the “old system” and assuring his audience that the Anschluss would see the economy flourish and unemployment disappear. His paean to the importance of Austrian farmers as the “blood-source” of the *Volk* also contained two antisemitic remarks about “*Finanzjuden*” (Jewish bankers), who, he claimed, had repeatedly taken advantage of farmers.⁵⁹ These comments, though made in passing, demonstrate that Reinthaller shared the Nazis’ antisemitic worldview.⁶⁰

Reinthaller officially worked as minister of agriculture for the German Reich’s “State of Austria” until April 1939, when all Austrian administrative agencies were closed. In late 1939 he was appointed undersecretary of state for agricultural affairs in Berlin.⁶¹ This may have been thanks to Seyß-Inquart, who had suggested that Richard Walther Darré, Reich minister of food and agriculture, establish a department dedicated to mountain farmers and appoint Reinthaller as its head.⁶² The department was duly established within the ministry on February 1, 1940.⁶³ In addition, Reinthaller was made special commissioner for establishing the *Reichsnährstand* (Reich Food Estate, the Nazi body responsible for controlling agriculture and food production) in the *Ostmark*, as the Nazis called Austria. In 1942 he was appointed Regional Farmers’ Leader for the Lower Danube area, a role he continued to perform until the war ended.

During the Nazi period Reinthaller continued to enjoy the reputation he had built prior to 1938 as an agricultural expert who represented the interests of mountain farmers in both his publications⁶⁴ and his political activities.⁶⁵ His primary responsibilities included a “debt relief and development initiative” and “community development in the mountain regions,” which for him involved reducing migration to the cities and supporting the German Reich’s

“old-established farmers” (*Altbauerntum*). Reinthaller opposed German settlement in the East, which he viewed as a threat to a healthy, flourishing old-established peasantry, as it involved uprooting and transplanting mountain populations.⁶⁶ Leaving aside a few isolated critical comments, Reinthaller fully supported Nazi agricultural policies and their ideological exaltation of the peasantry. In promoting mountain farmers as the “best blood donors” for the German *Volk*, he drew on Nazi blood-and-soil rhetoric. And he was not averse to using coercion and repression to push through measures that were not universally welcomed by farmers.⁶⁷ The economic and social historian Ernst Langthaler describes Reinthaller as an extremely active “leader of the mountain farmer lobby from 1938 onward,” but points out that Reinthaller’s work for mountain farmers was always in the interests of his own career.⁶⁸

As far as we know today, Reinthaller was not directly involved in Nazi crimes. However, we can be sure that he was at least aware of these crimes, given the high positions he held within the Nazi regime. For example, in his capacity as regional director of agriculture, he and twenty local agricultural leaders visited Mauthausen concentration camp on June 19, 1942. The camp’s activity log states that on that day, “two Jewish inmates were shot while fleeing” and that “another Jewish inmate died [. . .] by suicide on an electric fence.”⁶⁹ As special commissioner for the *Reichsnährstand* in the *Ostmark*, Reinthaller was one of those responsible for the “de-Jewification” of Austrian agriculture, a process that began directly after the Anschluss and involved “Aryanizing” rural and forest assets and properties.⁷⁰ In addition, in his capacity as director of agriculture for the Lower Danube region, he was responsible for deploying 10,000 forced laborers on Lower Austrian farms, which means that he bore some responsibility for their inhumane treatment.⁷¹ While there have been some studies of Nazi agricultural policies and the use of forced laborers in the Austrian and Lower Austrian farming industry, further research is needed to ascertain what Reinthaller’s exact activities were.

In addition to the positions mentioned above, Reinthaller was a member of the German Reichstag, a *Landesjägermeister* (chairman of a regional hunting association), and a *Landesförstmeister* (regional head forester). He received several Nazi honors over the course of his career, including the SS death’s-head ring in May 1941. At the time Reinthaller said that the ring would be “a constant reminder of the unshakable solidarity and camaraderie within the SS.”⁷² He also wore the SS Honor Chevron and the Golden Party Badge of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP, *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*), an honor he had doggedly pursued.⁷³

Reinthaller on Trial: Self-Justification and Self-Presentation

When the war ended, Reinthaller decamped to his native Upper Austria in the American Zone of Occupation. He was arrested by the US forces there on August 28, 1945, and detained in Camp Marcus W. Orr, an American internment camp in Salzburg (also known as Camp Glasenbach) on October 5, 1945. As a former Nazi minister and SS *Brigadeführer*, Reinthaller appeared alongside eighty-five other Nazi perpetrators on the first war-crime list for Austria, which was published on December 4, 1945.⁷⁴ On October 8, 1946, after a year's internment, he was transferred to the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, where he was heard as a witness several times.⁷⁵ In July 1947 he was transferred to the American internment camp in Dachau, where he was imprisoned for almost a year before being sent back to Nuremberg for another few months in early March 1948. In August 1948 Reinthaller was sent to the Nuremberg-Langwasser internment camp, which was administered by the state of Bavaria, where he remained until his release on November 8, 1948. He then lived for half a year in Traunstein, where, as instructed by the Bavarian denazification authority, he was to await the denazification court's ruling on his case. The ruling was never delivered, however, as on July 1, 1949, the Counterintelligence Corps arrested Reinthaller at the behest of the state police in Vienna and extradited him to Austria. On July 29, 1949, he was held in custody at the Regional Criminal Court in Vienna, where he awaited the beginning of his trial at the *Volksgericht* in Vienna in October 1950.

Reinthaller was not idle during his time in custody. He worked out his line of defense in long letters and essays, which varied in tone from self-pity to aggression to self-righteousness.⁷⁶ Also dating to this time are handwritten notes he titled "Thoughts I Have Been Forced to Mull Over since 1945,"⁷⁷ which focus on the development of Nazism and the phenomenon of antisemitism. These notes provide a good insight into Reinthaller's tendency to trivialize Nazism, but they also reveal that he continued to approve of Nazi racial ideology and the resulting marginalization and persecution of Jews. Yet Reinthaller vociferously distanced himself from the Holocaust, which he described as a calamitous political mistake resulting from Hitler's "insanity."⁷⁸ Most people opposed these "excessive measures" or else were unaware of them, he claimed:

The extermination that began in the final years of the war was planned by a very small group of people around Hitler and carried out by select groups of inhuman individuals. Only those directly involved knew about these things. [...] The annihilation of the Jews had nothing to do with the German public,

the Nazi Party, or “antisemitic” ideology. [. . .] It was not until 1945 that the crimes and atrocities came to light, atrocities that cannot be blamed on the people or the Party, but solely on the individual culprits.⁷⁹

In attributing the Holocaust to a tiny group of perpetrators and claiming to be unaware of what was happening—an interpretive pattern followed by many former Nazis—Reinthaller sought to exculpate not just himself, but also the majority of the population. However, his antisemitic *völkisch* rhetoric demonstrates a complete lack of empathy and guilt feelings and therefore severely undermines his attempts to distance himself from Nazi crimes.

Most of Reinthaller’s notes deal with criminal jurisdiction and denazification in general and with his pending trial in particular.⁸⁰ His sense of victimhood and fulminations against supposedly illegitimate “victor’s justice” are recurring themes in all his writing of this time. A letter to the president of Austria, Karl Renner, for example, reveals his agitated state of mind while in custody. Reinthaller began the letter by asking:

How much longer will you allow your patience to be exploited, Mr. President? How much longer will you look on as the legal system is prostituted by a judiciary that, by the power of law, has been turned into the whore of politics and to some extent enjoys playing this role? [. . .] And how much longer will you allow so-called “people’s courts” to censor world history—something only history itself has the right to do—against the will of the people?⁸¹

In the same letter Reinthaller dismissed denazification as blind “revenge laws” and described himself as someone “who, since 1945, has been incarcerated in concentration camps and prisons with all manner of criminal thugs.”⁸² His pleas for a “return to sense and reason” went unanswered, however, as the *Volksgericht* refused to send the letter on to the president “because of its offensive content, in part punishable under criminal law.”⁸³

The trial ran from October 23 until October 26, 1950, at the *Volksgericht* in Vienna, the defendant’s fame ensuring that it attracted a great deal of publicity.⁸⁴ The indictment presented by the public prosecutor’s office in Vienna on May 24, 1950, included a charge of “high treason against the Austrian people.” Reinthaller was charged under §§10 and 11 of the *Verbotsgesetz* with being a member of the illegal Nazi Party, as proven by his admission to the party in 1928, his designation as an *alter Kämpfer* (a member of the old guard), his numerous party honors, and his SS membership. In addition, Reinthaller was indicted for his work as a minister in Seyß-Inquart’s cabinet, in particular his contribution to the Law on the Reunification of Austria with the German

Reich of March 13, 1938. In signing this law, Reinthaller had facilitated the Nazi seizure of power, which constituted the crime of “high treason against the Austrian people,” the indictment read.⁸⁵ The *Volksgericht* confined itself to formal aspects of the indictment, and so Reinthaller’s other activities, such as his role in the use of forced laborers in the Lower Danube Gau, were mentioned in neither the indictment nor the trial itself.

Reinthaller’s defense attorneys questioned the retroactive application of the laws invoked in the indictment; indeed, before the trial had begun, they had unsuccessfully demanded that the case be dropped.⁸⁶ Once the trial was under way, the attorneys adhered to the line of defense they had worked out with Reinthaller in advance.⁸⁷ They argued (and provided documentation) that, in a preliminary investigation, the US military authorities in Nuremberg had found no incriminating evidence against Reinthaller.⁸⁸ As there was no disputing the fact that Reinthaller had joined the Nazi Party at an early point, his attorneys sought to present him as a “moderate National Socialist” and “peace-maker” who had been repeatedly threatened with expulsion from the party because of his conflict with the “radical” Habicht. Reinthaller’s SS membership and promotions, meanwhile, were depicted as nothing more than “honorary positions” and friendly favors from his superior Darré. When contesting the charge of high treason under the KVG, Reinthaller’s attorneys quibbled over legal technicalities, arguing that Reinthaller had signed the “reintegration law” on March 13, 1938, only because he had been put under extreme political pressure. Furthermore, they argued that as German troops had already marched into Austria by that point, Reinthaller could not be said to have “facilitated” the Nazi seizure of power.⁸⁹ According to newspaper reports, one of the attorneys went so far as to claim in his closing argument that “Reinthaller did more for our beleaguered fatherland than anyone else in this courtroom.”⁹⁰

The defendant put on an equally self-confident performance in court; he did not betray the slightest sense of guilt. The daily *Neues Österreich* described him as a “robust Nordic farmer-type embodying the ideology of ‘blood and soil.’” According to the report, Reinthaller adopted an “Emperor Franz Joseph pose” during the trial: “A little stooped, with white mutton chop sideburns and a gray *Aussee* suit [a traditional Austrian costume], he was suffering from stomach problems, and every now and then he would ask the court for a short break so that he could drink from the thermos of black coffee he had brought along with him.”⁹¹ This rather harmless image was undermined by the brashness of Reinthaller’s statements, however.⁹² As well as pleading not guilty “to a single count in the indictment,” he called into question the legitimacy of the *Volksgericht*. Paradoxically, Reinthaller denied that he had been involved in il-

legal activities between 1933 and 1938, yet he also claimed that his “peacemaking initiative” activities should be regarded as patriotic. Echoing his statements during his examinations as a witness in Nuremberg, he presented himself as a selfless innocent who had been unwittingly forced into various high positions,⁹³ as a dutiful Austrian who had acted solely in the country’s best interests, and as a “victim” of the rapid sequence of events of March 1938. “These events, which came crashing down on us like a torrent, had us all up against the wall,” he rather melodramatically claimed.⁹⁴ In response, the communist newspaper *Volksstimme* commented, “According to his account, Austria was truly blessed to have him put himself at the service of the Nazis. The only thing we were spared was a description of ‘Reinthaller, the resistance fighter.’”⁹⁵

Reinthaller never denied that he had been an early convert to Nazism, but, like many other Nazis, he depicted himself as a “disillusioned idealist” who had “believed” in Hitler only to be politically “deceived and betrayed.”⁹⁶ “To this day, we and the former Nazis are told that we must have known where the road would lead,” he claimed in court. “We are told that we must have known as early as 1927 or 1928 that Nazism would bring nothing but war, concentration camps, crimes, and atrocities. But I must openly confess that I knew nothing of that at the time.”⁹⁷ When asked about the gas chambers in the concentration camps, Reinthaller claimed that he had learned of them only much later, telling the prosecutor, “As a German, I bow my head in sorrow just as much as you, counselor!”⁹⁸

Reinthaller also emphasized that he had been a “critical” National Socialist who had increasingly distanced himself from the Nazi regime.⁹⁹ According to the newspaper *Das kleine Volksblatt*, he told the court, “I believed in Hitler before he went astray. My aversion to him began when he violated international law in 1939. At that point, I was out.”¹⁰⁰ Reinthaller’s defense echoes that put forward by many Austrian Nazis who presented their disillusionment with the Nazi regime as an outright rejection of Nazism, when in reality it had had more to do with disappointment that the Anschluss had not offered them the autonomy and the improved career opportunities for which they had hoped.

Accounts of Reinthaller’s general behavior during the trial reinforce the impression conveyed by his letters. On the one hand, he appeared conciliatory and accommodating, and his argumentation was skilled. On the other hand, he was extremely arrogant, often even domineering, and many of his statements were mawkish and self-pitying. This was particularly evident in his attempts to paint himself as a “victim” of both radical Nazis and denazification.

Reinthaller’s trial provides a striking illustration of the personal and political links and ideological closeness between Christian Socialists and na-

tionalists prior to 1938, as well as the Austrofascist regime's grave misjudgment of Nazism.¹⁰¹ Former Nazis and clerical-conservative figures appeared as witnesses for the defense, the latter group including many ÖVP politicians whom Reinthaller had known prior to 1938. Heinrich Gleißner, who attested to applause in the gallery that Reinthaller had always been a "decent person" and a staunch opponent of violence, was a particularly important witness. The former director of security, Revertera, also described Reinthaller as a "moderate," harmony-seeking National Socialist. According to a report in the ÖVP-affiliated *Wiener Tageszeitung*, Revertera vehemently told the court, "I wouldn't label him a Nazi. [. . .] He absolutely was not part of that crowd."¹⁰² Revertera and Gleißner even expressed their personal gratitude to Reinthaller for helping them after the Anschluss.¹⁰³ The statements made by many of these conservative witnesses for the defense were not purely altruistic acts of friendship, however; they also served to exonerate the witnesses themselves, because characterizing Reinthaller as "moderate" helped justify their own fatal willingness to compromise with the illegal Nazis.

To supplement the testimony of these well-known defense witnesses, Reinthaller's attorneys had gathered a considerable number of affidavits attesting to his excellent character from church representatives, political opponents, and former colleagues from the Nazi period.¹⁰⁴ Some of these figures stated that the defendant had assisted them or their (Jewish) relatives, though it is not always clear whether such *Persilscheine* (whitewash certificates) expressed genuine gratitude or were merely written as a favor to Reinthaller. For example, two siblings from Attersee thanked Reinthaller for helping their mother, who would otherwise have "suffered very greatly because of her racial classification." Reinthaller had pointedly kept in contact with the family, they wrote, and prevented their mother from being deported to a concentration camp.¹⁰⁵ A former schoolmate also attested that Reinthaller had prevented his wife—a "full Jew"—from being evicted from their home, a "noble deed" that may have saved her life, he claimed.¹⁰⁶ The conclusion drawn in many of these affidavits was that Reinthaller "did not in any way share the Nazi Party's despicable racial theory."¹⁰⁷ A good example is the following statement from a farmer's wife from Upper Austria:

I have known Mr. Reinthal[l]er, the engineer, for many years. Despite holding a high rank in the party from 1938 onward, he remained the kind, unpretentious person he had always been. Whenever he could help, he did. He helped me too. During the war, I was assigned a Polish farmhand who had an affair with my farm girl, an affair with serious

consequences. Both were threatened with arrest, but Mr. Reinthaller prevented them from being arrested, thereby demonstrating that he opposed Nazi terror.¹⁰⁸

There can be little doubt that this particular affidavit was written as a favor, given that its author was Reinthaller's sister-in-law, a detail she failed to mention. While it is true that Reinthaller saved a few personal and professional acquaintances from persecution, his own claim that he had helped "many thousands of persecuted Austrians between the difficult years 1938 to 1945" was a massive exaggeration.¹⁰⁹

The court's verdict, which was delivered on October 26, 1950, accepted several of the defense counsel's arguments. Reinthaller was sentenced to "three years of hard penal servitude with the additional penalty of *hartes Lager* [having to sleep on a hard floor] once every quarter," and his assets were confiscated—a relatively lenient punishment, considering the range of sentences available. He was found not guilty of high treason under KVG §8.¹¹⁰ Mitigating factors cited by the court included the fact that Reinthaller had assisted prominent opponents of the Nazi regime, had asserted the "Austrian position against the German Reich's advance," and had promoted the interests of Austrian farmers. However, the court's ruling disproved every aspect of Reinthaller's claim that he had not been an "illegal"—that is, that he had not been active in the illegal NSDAP. The time Reinthaller had already served in internment camps was subtracted from his sentence, and as a result, he was released immediately after the trial.

After further submissions were made, proceedings were resumed and transferred to the *Volksgericht* in Linz. Following a hastily arranged hearing on May 7, 1952, which focused solely on Reinthaller's illegal Nazi Party membership, his sentence was commuted to two and a half years, but the court upheld the decision to confiscate his assets.¹¹¹ Despite the commutation, Reinthaller and his attorneys viewed the ruling as a major setback, indeed as a "catastrophe."¹¹² After a short phase of resignation, the defense attorneys leapt back into action, petitioning for another resumption of proceedings. By this stage, Reinthaller had sent a clemency appeal to the Austrian president, Theodor Körner, in which he reiterated his usual arguments and his patriotism for Austria.¹¹³ While he continued to petition ÖVP politicians, he also stepped up his efforts to win over Social Democrats by playing the "red card." Robert Scheuch, a VdU politician from Carinthia who had once worked with Reinthaller in the Nazi ministry, secured a meeting with Vice Chancellor Adolf Schärff, a Social Democrat, with the aim of persuading Schärff to

plead Reinthaller's case before the Ministry of Justice.¹¹⁴ All of these efforts ultimately bore fruit. In early 1953 the ruling of the *Volksgericht* in Linz was quashed and a resumption of proceedings was announced but never occurred. On June 16, 1953, President Körner pardoned the former Nazi minister Anton Reinthaller. This meant that Reinthaller's ability to be politically active was now fully restored.¹¹⁵

Reinthaller and the Establishment of the FPÖ: The "National" Camp Unites

A paradigm shift had taken place in Austrian politics in the early 1950s. The anti-fascist mood of the immediate postwar period had dissipated, and denazification had largely ended in—and indeed been reversed by—a series of amnesties and pardons. As a result, the VdU, having lost one of its key issues, found itself facing a major political crisis. Most Nazi "offenders" had been re-integrated both socially and professionally, and their reinvigorated political ambitions demonstrated that they had found a new sense of self-confidence. In 1949, "implicated" figures had still recognized the importance—in tactical terms, at least—of keeping a low political profile, but by the 1950s, this reticence had largely faded.

This transformed political background provided German nationalist forces both within and outside the VdU with new impetus. Extreme "nationals" who no longer felt represented by the VdU began to focus their hopes on Reinthaller, or "Herr Minister," as they continued to call him. After his pardon he was urged by several old "buddies" to reenter politics. While Reinthaller himself claimed to be tired of politics, he was in fact extremely active, as demonstrated by the many contacts he cultivated at this time. Figures from all sides of the heterogeneous "national" camp came to him with their concerns. For example, Fritz Butschek, who had once worked with him in the *Reichsnährstand*, regularly discussed tensions within the VdU with Reinthaller.¹¹⁶ Ernst Strachwitz, leader of the *Heimkehrer Hilfs- und Betreuungsstelle* (Help and Support Center for *Heimkehrer*), a Graz-based organization with close links to the ÖVP, also expressed interest in working with Reinthaller.¹¹⁷ Stefan Schachermayr, a former Nazi Gau inspector who had worked closely with Gauleiter August Eigruber, kept Reinthaller up to date on the status of incarcerated Nazi criminals and predicted that Reinthaller's political career would soon resume.¹¹⁸ Roland Timmel of the right-wing splinter group *Gemeinschaft Österreich* (Austrian Community) informed Reinthaller that the minister of the interior, Oskar Helmer,

had said that he did not “foresee any difficulties” in Reinthaller becoming involved in politics again, and indeed that Austria was in need of a “proper ‘national’ party headed up by respectable characters.”¹¹⁹ The chairman of the VdU, Max Stendebach, would later comment sarcastically that everyone was “mesmerized by this Dalai Lama” and would “make the pilgrimage” in order to feed Reinthaller misinformation and curry favor.¹²⁰ More than a few of the *Ehemaligen* stated that if Reinthaller returned to politics, they would reenter politics themselves, bringing their years of abstention to an end. One of these was the then-unknown Friedrich Peter, who, when initially offering his assistance, introduced himself to Reinthaller as a former Nazi.¹²¹ All these figures pinned their political hopes on Reinthaller, a seasoned “peacemaker” who they believed would be able to unite the factions within the “national” camp.

It was with similar hopes that the VdU also made overtures to Reinthaller. Herbert Kraus had invited Reinthaller to share ideas in 1952, but Reinthaller had declined on the grounds that his ability to be politically active had not yet been fully restored.¹²² Kraus’s successor, Stendebach, was also in contact with Reinthaller from an early stage and was not opposed to the idea of working with him.¹²³ Helfried Pfeifer, a member of parliament from the extreme right of the VdU, pressed ahead in January 1954, asking Reinthaller if he wanted to run for the position of federal chairman of the VdU.¹²⁴

Electoral defeats in 1953 and internal party conflicts further fueled the debate over how the VdU might reverse its decline. The key question was whether the VdU could be reformed from within, or whether it ought to be completely reinvented under a new, more “national” leadership. In the months that followed, intense negotiations centered on how the party might become a “Third Force” that would unite the divided “national” camp both within and beyond the VdU.¹²⁵ Against this crisis, the VdU began to play the “national card” more overtly. At its annual national conference in Bad Aussee in May 1954, the party adopted a new manifesto that included a stronger commitment to “national convictions” and “national policies.”¹²⁶ At the same conference the VdU chairman and former *Wehrmacht* officer Stendebach spoke provocatively of an “invisible border” between Austria and Germany, another conscious attempt to accentuate the party’s German nationalist orientation.¹²⁷ The party also unanimously agreed to offer Reinthaller a leading role in the VdU, a move that was clearly intended to send a signal to dissatisfied *Ehemalige*.¹²⁸ Reinthaller’s “Glaserbachers” were certainly very pleased that his name had been put forward, commenting that they hoped to have him “in our ranks as soon as possible.”¹²⁹ The Styrian branch of the VdU, which would be the first to align

itself with him, also pushed for “Reinthaller and other prominent figures from the ‘national’ camp” to be instated in “key positions.”¹³⁰

Reinthaller was skeptical of the VdU’s overtures but generally kept this to himself. Though privately he made no secret of the fact that he saw no future for the party, he believed an immediate intervention would be tactically unwise: “These people are not yet ready for root and branch reforms. Fate will probably have to deliver more slaps in the face than they have already had.” Instead, Reinthaller recommended waiting “until this whole thing [. . .] collapses and meets the fate it deserves so that it can then be freshly built on new foundations.”¹³¹ According to the FPÖ’s version of events, Reinthaller himself did not harbor political ambitions and was reluctant to become involved in politics again because of his Nazi past.¹³² In a letter to Peter, Reinthaller wrote, “I don’t want to enter the picture at all, as I myself feel that I am encumbered by the burden of the past. But I am happy to be the midwife, to help you boys into the saddle.”¹³³ A memo setting out Reinthaller’s three conditions for his return to politics show that his motivations were not entirely selfless, however: “1. Money, 2. Power, 3. A seat (approx. 10,000 s[chillings] per month).”¹³⁴ This memo demonstrates that Reinthaller was certainly not exploited for political purposes, as has often been claimed.

In October 1954, regional elections in a number of Austrian states were a debacle (or “slap in the face”) for the VdU, which suffered severe losses in terms of votes and seats. It was only then that Reinthaller officially rejected the party’s advances.¹³⁵ Having come to the conclusion that the VdU could no longer be reformed, he stated for the first time that his political goal was to put himself at the service of “a *völkisch* freedom party in Austria.”¹³⁶ With that, a de facto decision to create a new party uniting all “national” factions was made. It would appear that word had spread that Reinthaller was prepared to reenter politics, as he received numerous letters expressing delight that “in accordance with the wishes of a large number of people, in particular the majority of our old friends,” he had decided to devote himself to the “Third Force.”¹³⁷ A “Committee for National Unity,” consisting of loyal *Ehemalige* who saw it as their “highest duty to bring together as quickly as possible this country’s national forces and groups,” was immediately established in Carinthia.¹³⁸ Reinthaller’s allies urged him to act, promising their full support.¹³⁹ Convinced that it was the right time for him to make a political return, they dismissed any concerns about “the specter of neo-Nazism being invoked once again,” claiming that “neo-Nazism lost its impact long ago and doesn’t scare anyone these days.”¹⁴⁰

In early 1955, Reinthaller, who until then had remained in the background, entered the political stage and established the *Freiheitspartei*.¹⁴¹ Apart from

Reinthaller himself, the new party's leading figures included the former illegal Nazi and Nazi propagandist Emil van Tongel, the former SS member Friedrich Peter, and Reinthaller's old friend from the *Reichsnährstand*, Fritz Butschek. All of these men would later play a key role in establishing the FPÖ. It is said to have been the Austrian Chancellor, Julius Raab (ÖVP), who ultimately convinced Reinthaller to return to politics, advising him to surround himself with "boost-producing democratic elements."¹⁴² Raab knew Reinthaller personally and saw him as a reliable contact who shared certain ideological positions. Furthermore, Raab assumed that his party's rival, the SPÖ, would never form a coalition with a well-known Nazi, and that this would provide the ÖVP with more political room to maneuver.¹⁴³

External observers occasionally became involved in the ongoing negotiations on a "Third Force." One of these was the German-born Gottfried Griesmayr,¹⁴⁴ who acted as an intermediary between the VdU, on the one hand, and Reinthaller and his followers, on the other.¹⁴⁵ Griesmayr advised Reinthaller to take over the VdU but warned him not to dispense with Kraus altogether because, according to Griesmayr, Kraus's "liberal-clerical veneer, his Western-ness could 'soften' and complement the [party's] strong-as-an-oak nationalism. A Reinthaller-Kraus alliance would be a true compromise to start with."¹⁴⁶ However, the VdU middleman Jörg Kandutsch refused to entertain such a suggestion: "The belief that men had to be used as fig leaves back in 1949 [. . .] because the 'elite of the national movement' were unable or unwilling to step forward, but that these [fig leaves] are now redundant, is in my view reprehensible and politically stupid. I refuse to stoop to this."¹⁴⁷ However, Kandutsch, who was known to be a Kraus supporter, later had a change of heart and played a leading role in the FPÖ from its beginnings.

The establishment of the *Freiheitspartei* was followed by months of negotiations on uniting the national camp. Mutual mistrust brought these negotiations close to collapse on several occasions.¹⁴⁸ Over the course of 1955, the Styrian and Carinthian regional associations of the VdU, followed by others, split from the party and defected to Reinthaller. On October 17, 1955, it was decided that Reinthaller's *Freiheitspartei* would join forces with those factions of the VdU that had been purged of "liberals," as well as diverse right-wing figures who had hitherto not been attached to any political party, to form a new "united freedom party." The new party's organ, *Die Neue Front*, applauded the decision:

Hundreds of thousands of Austrian women and men are sick of the coalition parties' dictatorship and its pernicious forms and are therefore

calling for a strong, freedom-oriented opposition. Over the past few days, these people have witnessed the fulfillment of a long-cherished wish. At last, the many factions that are positioned between and against black and red and share the same political goals have managed to come together to form a single organization.¹⁴⁹

The new party agreed on the name *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, and in November, it published a short manifesto pledging, among other things, support for a “social *Volks-gemeinschaft*” and belonging to a “German *Volks- und Kultur-gemeinschaft*.”¹⁵⁰ According to the FPÖ itself, its members received a tumultuous reception when it made its public debut in December 1955.¹⁵¹ But despite such public support, internal squabbling continued within the supposedly unified “national” camp. In Styria, the radical former SS member Herbert Schweiger led a rebellion by right-wing extremists,¹⁵² while in Upper Austria, some erstwhile Nazi functionaries felt that Reinthaller was not paying them the respect they deserved as “old comrades-in-arms.”¹⁵³ Quarrels also broke out over seats, causing an exasperated Reinthaller to threaten to resign in early 1956. The resignation was averted, however, after van Tongel pleaded with Reinthaller to remain.¹⁵⁴

The FPÖ was officially founded on April 7, 1956, with the slogan “faith, loyalty, and sacrifice. Then the future is ours.” At this first FPÖ party conference, which was held in the relatively modest surroundings of a drab, narrow room in the Weißer Hahn hotel in Vienna, Reinthaller was elected party chairman by a large majority. In his acceptance speech, he called for unity within the “national-liberal” camp and stated unequivocally that Austrians belonged “to the German *Volk*.”¹⁵⁵ This marked a radical departure from Reinthaller’s previous public statements, in which he had professed his allegiance to Austria and distanced himself from the Nazi leadership, comments that had provoked ire within his own ranks.¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, at the party conference, Reinthaller also rejected “every form of extremism, no matter whether it is to the right or the left” and advocated a “politics of the center.”¹⁵⁷ He and the FPÖ would continue to follow this two-pronged strategy, pledging support for German nationalism to appeal to its own supporters, on the one hand, yet adopting a moderate tone and rejecting a vaguely defined “extremism” to reassure outside observers on the other.¹⁵⁸ Reinthaller’s positioning of the FPÖ as a centrist party was reflected in the seating arrangement in the newly formed parliament.¹⁵⁹ The FPÖ demanded that its parliamentary group be seated in the middle of the parliament, a demand that was granted in 1956 (unlike in 1949, when the same request from the VdU had been refused). However, the FPÖ had little

time to mobilize when a snap general election was called in May 1956, and so, to its great disappointment, it won only 6.5 percent of the vote, which resulted in six seats.

As agreed, the VdU was dissolved immediately after the establishment of the FPÖ. The deposed Kraus withdrew from politics, explaining with some bitterness that he had decided to leave the party because of a “long-planned coup” carried out “by a small circle of right-wing extremists and Nazi leaders.” The FPÖ’s self-characterization as a “party of the center” was a smokescreen, according to Kraus. In reality, he said, the FPÖ was a party “focused on the past” whose aim was to provide “certain fallen heroes of the Nazi regime with a new political platform.”¹⁶⁰ The FPÖ dismissed Kraus’s criticism, which was clearly directed at Reinthaller, and responded with counterattacks.¹⁶¹ Newspapers such as the *Linzer Volksblatt* reported on a “Nazi coup within the FPÖ,”¹⁶² while the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* warned that “the ‘Gauleiter club’ is stirring once again.”¹⁶³ In the same vein, the communist *Volksstimme* described the FPÖ as a “new Nazi Party” with Reinthaller, “one of the foremost gravediggers of Austrian independence,” at its helm.¹⁶⁴

Despite their hyperbolic nature, these criticisms were not easy to refute. Presiding over the FPÖ was a high-ranking and committed Nazi who determined the party’s direction until his death in March 1958.¹⁶⁵ Reinthaller was succeeded by his protégé, Friedrich Peter, another “incriminated” figure, who, as a member of an infamous SS unit, had been involved in mass murders.¹⁶⁶ Inveterate Nazis had also been installed at many other levels of the party, in the national executive committee, and in the party’s regional branches. While less prominent than Reinthaller and Peter, these figures were characterized as “right-wing extremists” even by historians who were sympathetic to the party.¹⁶⁷ In addition, several “incriminated” figures and German nationalist *Burschenschaft* members began to flock to the FPÖ and its milieu, having received new political impetus from the change in leadership.¹⁶⁸ There were hardly any personnel changes within the parliamentary group, however, as five of the six members of parliament had been active in the VdU, and the only new member—Heinz Zechmann, a former *Reichsredner* (Reich Propaganda Speaker) and Gauamtsleiter (head of a Gau office)—was one of Reinthaller’s men. All things considered, the shifts in Austria’s political landscape that took place in 1956 were less dramatic than has often been claimed. The widespread view that the “liberal” VdU was supplanted by the “national” FPÖ is mistaken, as many former Nazis were members of the VdU and the two parties shared obvious ideological commonalities.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it is true that the establishment of the FPÖ marked a transfer of

power to the extreme “nationals” who dominated the party. It therefore also marked a clear shift to the right. In the decades that followed, the FPÖ was a small but extremely ideologically driven party with a clear German nationalist orientation.¹⁷⁰ Owing to its Nazi links in terms of both personnel and ideology, as well as its failure to distance itself from National Socialism, the FPÖ has played with right-wing extremism throughout its history.¹⁷¹

Conclusion: Treading the Line between Continuity and Adaptation

The reorganization of the *Ehemaligen* can be understood only in the context of postwar Austria's political reckoning with the past. After a brief anti-fascist phase, during which denazification barred them from political involvement, former Nazis rapidly began to reorganize. The most successful of the new parties was Herbert Kraus's VdU, which provided a haven for all those Nazis who did not wish to join the major parties. The fight against denazification was a key point in the VdU's political agenda, but as denazification wound down, this point quickly became obsolete. The resulting crisis in the VdU led to infighting in the early 1950s between those VdU leaders who were deemed too “liberal” and the increasingly self-confident and politically ambitious “nationals.” After years of internal power struggles, the latter emerged victorious. In the meantime, international affairs had developed to the advantage of the “nationals.” External monitoring of Austrian politics ceased with the Austrian State Treaty of May 1955, which saw the Allies withdraw from the country. From then on there was nothing standing in the way of the full rehabilitation of the *Ehemaligen*. It is no coincidence, then, that the political mobilization of the *Ehemaligen* and the establishment of the FPÖ with its (German) nationalist orientation took place during this period. Numerous former Nazis were active in the FPÖ and its affiliated associations and veterans' organizations, such as *Soziales Friedenswerk*, *Kameradschaft IV*, *Wohlfahrtsvereinigung der Glasenbacher*, *Österreichischer Turnverein*, and German nationalist *Burschenschaften*. Many of these former Nazis had ostensibly (and reluctantly) adjusted to Austria's new democratic order, but at heart, they had remained largely true to their convictions. The FPÖ served as the political representative of this *Ehemaligen* milieu, a milieu which, despite its heterogeneity, managed to build a community spanning decades and indeed generations based on shared experiences, views, and memories.

Anton Reinthaller was more than just part of this milieu: he was its central political actor. Though it spanned three successive systems—the First Austrian Republic/Austrofascism, Nazism, and the Second Austrian Republic—his

career demonstrates marked biographical and ideological continuities, and so in numerous respects it is representative of many Austrian Nazis. As a high-ranking Nazi functionary, Reinthaller espoused Nazi ideology, actively facilitated the Anschluss, and was implicated in the Nazi regime and its crimes until the war ended. His storybook career under Nazism was typical of elite Austrian Nazi functionaries. There is no evidence at present that he was directly involved in Nazi crimes, but the high political and administrative positions he held within the regime mean that he bore at least partial responsibility for these crimes. Reinthaller was one of the few prominent Nazi functionaries in Austria who, after undergoing the usual denazification procedures, went on to assume a key political position again after the war.

Reinthaller's retrospective explanation of Nazism and his own role within it was typical of the *Ehemaligen* discourse. He presented himself as a passive altruist who had acted only at the behest of others and had never pursued his own political goals. At the same time, he drew on the familiar motif of the "disillusioned idealist," skillfully combining it with the trope of the Nazi who became increasingly critical after 1938. But while Reinthaller retrospectively distanced himself from the Holocaust, he had completely embraced the *völkisch* and antisemitic ideology of National Socialism at the time. In the light of his political activities, the high positions he held, and his convictions, which remained largely unchanged throughout the various political systems he operated in, the image he sought to project can be seen as a retrospective attempt to justify his actions and absolve himself of blame. His insistence that he was a "victim of victor's justice" and the odious parallels he drew between his own internment and the experiences of those imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps were also typical of the self-exoneration strategies deployed in the *Ehemaligen* milieu. Reinthaller was never willing to accept personal responsibility or admit to guilt.

There are several reasons why the *Ehemaligen* rallied around Reinthaller and pinned their hopes on him after 1945. First and foremost, he was one of the few high-ranking Austrian Nazis available after 1945, and thanks to his long political career, he was relatively well known. Furthermore, as an "a member of the old guard," Reinthaller appeared to be committed to National Socialist ideology and was therefore highly regarded by the unreconstructed *Ehemaligen*. Also working in his favor were his political experience as a former Nazi minister and the strong network he had built beyond his own party. Finally, Reinthaller was seen as a "peacemaker," a conciliatory figure who was also a formidable political maneuverer, and as such he was believed to be best placed to unite the divided nationalist camp.

The role of “intermediary”—a role he adopted in three political systems—was one of the constants in Reinthaller’s life. After the war, he downplayed his pre-1938 negotiations with the Austrofascist regime. In describing them as “peacemaking initiatives,” he cleverly cemented his reputation as a “moderate” Nazi. On the one hand, it is true that Reinthaller might be considered “moderate” when compared with the far more radical and violent wings of the Nazi Party in the 1930s. On the other hand, however, Reinthaller’s central role in the negotiations is evidence of his high status within the illegal Nazi Party. Reinthaller’s activities as an intermediary enabled him to cultivate valuable contacts within conservative-bourgeois circles and to use these contacts to his advantage in the changed political landscape of postwar Austria. His flair for forging alliances and his close relationship with the ÖVP were not solely due to the personal contacts he had built up prior to 1938, however; they also owed a great deal to his rural Catholic upbringing, to his professional experience in the agricultural sector, and to the ideological commonalities shared by the nationalist and clerical-conservative camps.

Notwithstanding his ideological convictions and his rootedness in the *Ehemaligen* milieu, Reinthaller proved himself willing and able to adapt to the changed circumstances after 1945. Aware of his vulnerable position as an “offender,” he refrained from making extreme statements, distanced himself from “inveterate” colleagues, and adopted a moderate official position with regard to the state of Austria. In the postwar years, declaring support for Austrian independence was seen as a litmus test for one’s rejection of Nazism and espousal of democracy. In contrast to many of his fellow German nationalists, Reinthaller was prepared to make this declaration (in public, at least). While this provoked criticism from within his own ranks, it also secured him the acceptance of his political opponents. His profession of support for the state of Austria and his half-hearted efforts to distance himself from Nazism were at odds with the German nationalist orientation of the very party he had founded, but it allowed him (along with many other former Nazis) to establish a place within the patriotic Austrian collective.

Anton Reinthaller’s significance in Austrian politics is due not just to his extraordinary career under National Socialism, but also to the central role he played in organizing the *Ehemaligen* into a political force after 1945. As the FPÖ’s founder and first chairman, he was a major political actor in the Second Republic. His postwar political career was a balancing act between biographical and ideological continuities, on the one hand, and adaptation, on the other. Though he remained largely true to his convictions after 1945, he adapted at least partly to the (not very stringent) normative requirements imposed by

official Austrian policies on reckoning with the past. In so doing, he showed himself to be “compatible” with postwar Austrian democracy.

Notes

1. This contribution is a considerably shortened version of my original publication “Anton Reinthaller und die Anfänge der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs. Der politische Werdegang eines Nationalsozialisten und die “Ehemaligen” in der “Zweiten Republik,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 66, no. 4 (October 2018): 539–75.

2. Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv (hereafter: OÖLA), Nachlass (personal papers, hereafter: NL) Reinthaller, Verband der Unabhängigen/Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (hereafter: VdU/FPÖ) IV, “Erklärung von Herbert Kraus, 12.4.1956.” See also “Wahlbündnis der SPOe mit der Reinthaller-Nazipartei: Ein Schlag ins Gesicht der sozialistischen Arbeiter,” *Volksstimme*, November 1, 1955. In the present article, every original German citation was translated by Sinéad Crowe unless otherwise stated.

3. See “Transparenz statt Diskretion! Stellungnahme am Österreichischen Zeitgeschichtetag 2018 an der Universität Wien zur sogenannten FPÖ-Historikerkommission,” Vienna, April 5, 2018, accessed November 21, 2019, www.openpetition.eu/at/petition/online/transparenz-statt-diskretion-fpoe-historikerkommission.

4. *Bericht der Historikerkommission: Analysen und Materialien zur Geschichte des Dritten Lagers und der FPÖ* (Vienna: Freiheitliches Bildungsinstitut, 2019), accessed May 7, 2020, https://www.fpoe.at/fileadmin/user_upload/www.fpoe.at/dokumente/2019/PDFs/Buch-Historikerkommission-Web.pdf; Margit Reiter/Oliver Rathkolb/Gerhard Baumgartner: *Wissenschaftliche Stellungnahme zum FPÖ-“Historikerbericht”: Nachwort zum FPÖ-Bericht “Analysen und Materialien zur Geschichte des ‘Dritten Lagers’ und der FPÖ,”* accessed May 7, 2020, <https://www.doew.at/neues/wissenschaftliche-stellungnahme-zum-fpoe-historikerbericht>.

5. See Kurt Piringer, *Der VdU: Verband der Unabhängigen 1949–1955. Eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Freiheitliche Akademie, 1999); idem, *Die Geschichte der Freiheitlichen: Beitrag der Dritten Kraft zur österreichischen Politik* (Vienna: Orac, 1982); Lothar Höbelt, *Von der vierten Partei zur dritten Kraft: Die Geschichte des VdU* (Graz: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 1999); Dieter Grillmayer, *National und Liberal: Die Geschichte der Dritten Kraft in Österreich* (Vienna: Edition Genius, 2006).

6. See Herbert Kraus, *Untragbare Objektivität: Politische Erinnerungen 1917 bis 1987* (Vienna: Amalthea, 1988); Viktor Reimann, *Die Dritte Kraft in Österreich* (Vienna: Molden, 1980); Fritz Stüber, *Ich war Abgeordneter: Die Entstehung der freiheitlichen Opposition in Österreich* (Graz: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 1974).

7. See Max E. Riedlsperger, *The Lingering Shadow of Nazism: The Austrian Independent Party Movement since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Kurt Richard Luther, “Zwischen unkritischer Selbstdarstellung und bedingungsloser externer Verurteilung: Nazivergangenheit, Antisemitismus und Holocaust im Schrifttum der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs,” in Werner Bergmann, Rainer Erb and Albert Lichtblau, eds., *Schwieriges Erbe: Der Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Antisemitismus in*

Österreich, der DDR und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 1995), 138–67.

8. See Lothar Höbelt, “Anton Reinthaller,” in Manfred Welan and Gerhard Poschacher, eds., *Von Figl bis Fischler: Bedeutende Absolventen der “BOKU” Wien* (Graz: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 2005), 165–69; Fritz Wolfram, “Anton Reinthaller: Der erste Bundesobmann der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs,” in *Freie Argumente* 20, no. 4 (1993): 66–68; Kurt Piringer, “Anton Reinthaller: Ein fester Charakter in stürmischer Zeit,” *Freie Argumente* 22, no. 2 (1995): 71–72.

9. See Lothar Höbelt, “Die ‘Aktion Reinthaller’: ‘Ständestaat’ und ‘Nationale Opposition,’” in *Oberösterreich 1918–1938*, ed. by Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv, vol. 1 (Linz: OÖLA, 2014), 47–88; Heinz-Dietmar Schimanko, *Der Fall Reinthaller: Das Strafverfahren gegen Anton Reinthaller vor dem Volksgericht* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2019).

10. Margit Reiter, *Die Ehemaligen: Der Nationalsozialismus und die Anfänge der FPÖ* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2019). The book is based on a project funded by the Austrian Science Fund titled “Antisemitism after the Shoah: Ideological Continuities and Political Reorientation of Former National Socialists in Postwar Austria” (P 27102–G16). See Margit Reiter, “Die ‘Ehemaligen’: Politische Reorganisation und Reintegration von ehemaligen Nationalsozialistinnen in Österreich nach 1945,” special issue, *Zeitgeschichte* 44, no. 3 (May/June 2017). See Margit Reiter, “Die ‘Ehemaligen’ nach 1945: Selbstpräsentationen, Antisemitismus und Antiamerikanismus,” in Lucile Dreidemy et al., eds., *Bananen, Cola, Zeitgeschichte: Oliver Rathkolb und das lange 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2015), 575–89; Margit Reiter, “Inklusion und Exklusion: Zur politischen Formierung ehemaliger Nationalsozialisten im Verband der Unabhängigen (VdU) und in der frühen FPÖ,” *Zeitgeschichte* 44, no. 3 (May/June 2017): 143–59.

11. Unfortunately, my numerous requests for access to the FPÖ’s archives were denied.

12. Reinthaller’s papers are held at the OÖLA. When I was conducting my research in 2015/16, these papers had not yet been fully organized. I wish to thank colleagues at the OÖLA for allowing me full access to this important material. A selection of documents from Reinthaller’s papers can be found in Lothar Höbelt, ed., *Aufstieg und Fall des VdU: Briefe und Protokolle aus privaten Nachlässen 1948–1955* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2015).

13. See “Verfassungsgesetz vom 8. Mai 1945 über das Verbot der NSDAP” *Staatsgesetzblatt* (hereafter: StGBL.), no. 13 (June 1945), accessed November 21, 2019, www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblPdf/1945_13_0/1945_13_0.pdf.

14. See “Verfassungsgesetz vom 26. Juni 1945 über Kriegsverbrechen und andere nationalsozialistische Untaten (Kriegsverbrechergesetz)” *StGBL.*, no. 32 (June 1945), accessed November 21, 2019, www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblPdf/1945_32_0/1945_32_0.pdf.

15. For a general overview of denazification in Austria, see Dieter Stiefel, *Entnazifizierung in Österreich* (Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1981); Sebastian Meissl, Klaus-Dieter Mulley and Oliver Rathkolb, eds., *Verdrängte Schuld, verfehlte Sühne: Entnazifizierung in Österreich 1945–1955* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1986); Walter Schuster and Wolfgang Weber, eds., *Entnazifizierung im regionalen Vergleich* (Linz: Archiv der Stadt Linz, 2004).

16. See Gerald Steinacher, *Nazis auf der Flucht: Wie Kriegsverbrecher über Italien nach Übersee entkamen*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2014).

17. See Wilhelm Svoboda, "... vorbehaltlos meine Pflicht erfüllt." Das Internierungslager Glaserbach (Camp 'Marcus W. Orr'), *Zeitgeschichte* 22, no. 1/2 (January/February 1995): 3–29; Oskar Dohle and Peter Eigelsberger, *Camp Marcus W. Orr: "Glaserbach" als Internierungslager nach 1945* (Linz: Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv, 2009); Gabriela Stieber, *Die Briten als Besatzungsmacht in Kärnten 1945–1955* (Klagenfurt: Verlag des Kärntner Landesarchivs, 2005).

18. See Reiter, *Die Ehemaligen*, 32–47.

19. At the core of the *Ehemaligen* were a heterogeneous mix of Austrian Nazi supporters and accomplices: see Dirk Hänisch, *Die österreichischen NSDAP-Wähler: Eine empirische Analyse ihrer politischen Herkunft und ihres Sozialprofils* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998); Gerhard Jagschitz, "Von der 'Bewegung' zum Apparat: Zur Phänomenologie der NSDAP 1938 bis 1945," in Emmerich Tálos, Ernst Hanisch and Wolfgang Neugebauer, eds., *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich: Ein Handbuch* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 2000), 88–122.

20. See Margit Reiter, *Die Generation danach: Der Nationalsozialismus im Familiengedächtnis* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2006), 53–57.

21. On the SPÖ, see Maria Mesner, ed., *Entnazifizierung zwischen politischem Anspruch, Parteienkonkurrenz und Kaltem Krieg: Das Beispiel der SPÖ* (Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005); Wolfgang Neugebauer and Peter Schwarz, eds., *Der Wille zum aufrechten Gang: Offenlegung der Rolle des BSA bei der gesellschaftlichen Reintegration ehemaliger Nationalsozialisten* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2005). On the ÖVP, see Michael Wladika, *Zur Repräsentanz von Politikern und Mandataren mit NS-Vergangenheit in der österreichischen Volkspartei 1945–1980*, Vienna 2018, accessed April 15, 2020, <http://www.vogelsanginstitut.at/at/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/forschungsbericht.pdf>; Matthias Falter, "Zwischen Kooperation und Konkurrenz: Die 'Ehemaligen' und die Österreichische Volkspartei," *Zeitgeschichte* 44, no. 3 (May/June 2017): 160–74; Hendrik Schäfer, *ÖVP, CDU/CSU und der Rechtsextremismus der Nachkriegszeit (1945–57): Ein Vergleich der Entwicklung in Österreich und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2005).

22. See Peter Autengruber, *Kleinparteien in Österreich 1945 bis 1966* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 1997); Reiter, *Inklusion*, 143–44.

23. See "Das Problem einer neuen Partei," *Berichte und Informationen* (hereafter: *BuI*), May 31, 1946; "Die Mißstände in unserem Parteiwesen," *BuI*, August 22, 1947; "Die möglichen Wege einer vierten Partei," *BuI*, November 26, 1948.

24. The VdU described itself as a *Wahlverband* (electoral league) for legal reasons; in avoiding the word "party," it circumvented the obligation to apply for a permit from the Allies. On the establishment of the VdU, see Höbelt, *Vierte Partei*; idem, ed., *Aufstieg und Fall*; Riedlsperger, *Lingering Shadow*, 39–74.

25. See "Versöhnung," *BuI*, December 20, 1946; "Das Nationalsozialistengesetz: Will man durch ein hochgefährliches Gesetz den Staatsvertrag erkaufen?," *BuI*, February 21, 1947; Viktor Reimann, "Überzeugung," *Salzburger Nachrichten*, June 4, 1947; Viktor Reimann, "Die versäumte Revolution," *Die Neue Front*, April 8, 1949; Reiter, *Inklusion*, 146–47.

26. "Die Ziele unseres Verbandes," *Die Neue Front*, February 25, 1949.

27. See Siegfried Göllner, *Die politischen Diskurse zur "Entnazifizierung,"*

“Causa Waldheim” und “EU-Sanktionen”: Opfernarrative und Geschichtsbilder in Nationalratsdebatten (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2009).

28. For criticism of this view, see Reiter, *Inklusion*, 146–47; Brigitte Behal, *Dr. Viktor Reimann 1915–1996: Historiker, Politiker, Publizist* (Diploma Thesis, University of Vienna, 2005).

29. See Reiter, *Inklusion*, 147–49. It is estimated that 60 percent of the VdU’s members were former Nazis: see Riedlsperger, *Lingering Shadow*, 45.

30. Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (hereafter: StLA), NL Karl Hartleb, box 1, personal folder, and box 16, VdU folder, 1946–51, “Der Fall Gordon Gollob.”

31. For further detail, see Piringer, *VdU*, 81–106; Höbelt, *Vierte Partei*, 139–78.

32. In the interwar period the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences was a stronghold of antisemitic German nationalist professors and students: see Paulus Ebner, *Politik und Hochschule: Die Hochschule für Bodenkultur 1914–1955* (Vienna: Deuticke, 2002).

33. See “Reinthalter Dipl.-Ing. Anton,” in Harry Slapnicka, *Oberösterreich: Die politische Führungsschicht 1918 bis 1938* (Linz: OLV-Buchverlag, 1976), 217–19, here 218. See also the information on Reinthalter in the OÖLA’s biographical database, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://www.landesarchiv-ooe.at/projekte/biografische-datenbank>.

34. Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, A1-Gauakten, Personalakten des Gaus Wien, Anton Reinthalter, and Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Archiv der Republik, Inneres, Gauakt Anton Reinthalter (77.2.46).

35. On the power struggles within the (illegal) Nazi Party prior to 1938, see Bruce Pauley, *Der Weg in den Nationalsozialismus: Ursprünge und Entwicklung in Österreich* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1988).

36. See Emmerich Tólos, *Das austrofaschistische Herrschaftssystem: Österreich 1933–1938* (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2013), 52–57.

37. See Pauley, *Weg in den Nationalsozialismus*, 105–22.

38. See Thomas Dostal, “Das ‘braune Netzwerk’ in Linz,” in Fritz Mayrhofer and Walter Schuster, eds., *Nationalsozialismus in Linz*, vol. 1 (Linz: Archiv der Stadt Linz, 2001), 21–136, here 79–80.

39. See Höbelt, “Aktion Reinthalter” in *Oberösterreich 1918–1938*; Dostal, “Braunes Netzwerk,” in Mayrhofer and Schuster, eds., *Nationalsozialismus*, vol. 1, 79–83; Pauley, *Weg in den Nationalsozialismus*, 146–48.

40. See Höbelt, “Aktion Reinthalter,” in *Oberösterreich 1918–1938*, 50–51.

41. OÖLA, Bestand Sammlungen und Nachlässe 2, Materialien zu NS-Biographien, box 11, “Reinthalter, Schreiben von Theo Habicht an Flüchtlingshilfswerk der NSDAP, Mitgliedschaftsamt, 25.3.1937.” In his postwar trial Reinthalter put forward this expulsion in his defense. In fact he claimed that he had been expelled from the party up to five times, but there is no documentation in the sources to support this: see Hellmut Butterweck, *Nationalsozialisten vor dem Volksgericht Wien: Österreichs Ringen um Gerechtigkeit 1945–1955 in der zeitgenössischen Wahrnehmung* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2016), 667.

42. See Peter Black, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner: Ideological Soldier of the Third Reich* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 89–93.

43. See Kurt Bauer, *Hitlers zweiter Putsch: Dollfuß, die Nazis und der 25. Juli 1934*

(St. Pölten: Residenz Verlag, 2014); Hans Schafranek, *Sommerfest mit Preisschießen: Die unbekannte Geschichte des NS-Putsches im Juli 1934* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2006).

44. Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte München (hereafter: IfZ-Archiv), ZS 1348, "Anton Reinthaller, Interrogation Nr. 682, 5.2.1947," 4–5.

45. See Dostal, "Braunes Netzwerk," in Mayrhofer and Schuster, eds., *Nationalsozialismus*, vol. 1, 73.

46. See Höbelt, "Aktion Reinthaller," in *Oberösterreich 1918–1938*, 56–57.

47. As of July 1, 1933, German citizens were required to pay a fee of 1,000 Reichsmarks whenever they crossed the border into Austria. The German Reich imposed this economic sanction to weaken the Austrian economy, which was heavily dependent on tourism.

48. See Höbelt, "Aktion Reinthaller," in *Oberösterreich 1918–1938*, 58.

49. See *ibid.*, 61.

50. See Dostal, "Braunes Netzwerk," in Mayrhofer and Schuster, eds., *Nationalsozialismus*, vol. 1, 83–90.

51. See Pauley, *Weg in den Nationalsozialismus*, 161–65.

52. See Höbelt, "Aktion Reinthaller," in *Oberösterreich 1918–1938*, 78.

53. On Seyß-Inquart's role in various "peacekeeping initiatives," see Johannes Koll, *Arthur Seyß-Inquart und die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in den Niederlanden (1940–1945)* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2015), 37–53.

54. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, N 1180/2. I am grateful to Johannes Koll for directing me to this source.

55. On the Anschluss, see Gerhard Botz, *Nationalsozialismus in Wien: Machtübernahme, Herrschaftssicherung, Radikalisierung, Kriegsvorbereitung 1938/39*, new expanded edition (Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2018).

56. IfZ-Archiv, ZS 1348, "Anton Reinthaller, Interrogation Nr. 682, 5.2.1947," 7.

57. ÖÖLA, Bestand Sammlungen und Nachlässe 2, Materialien zu NS-Biographien, box 11, "Reinthaller, SS-Personalhauptamt, Reinthaller, Anton (14.4.1895)."

58. See the clip from a speech given by Reinthaller at a referendum rally in Stumm, Tyrol, on April 1, 1938, available at Österreichische Mediathek, www.mediathek.at/atom/132D86A3-0F2-001ED-00000478-132D043B. The entire speech is available at www.mediathek.at/atom/017831DF-33B-018E6-00000BEC-01772EE2. Both links accessed November 22, 2019.

59. *Ibid.*

60. See Margit Reiter, "Antisemitismus in der FPÖ und im 'Ehemaligen'-Milieu nach 1945 in Österreich," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 27 (December 2018): 117–49, here 140–45.

61. See Gerhard Siegl, *Bergbauern im Nationalsozialismus: Die Berglandwirtschaft zwischen Agrarideologie und Kriegswirtschaft* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2013), 85.

62. Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter: BArchB), R 43 II/1356, "Arthur Seyß-Inquart an Richard Walther Darré, 3.5.1939." I am grateful to Johannes Koll for directing me to this source.

63. See Siegl, *Bergbauern*, 83–87.

64. See Anton Reinthaller, "Bauern auf kargen Böden," *Deutsche Agrarpolitik* 2, no. 8 (1944): 217–19; Reinthaller, "Die österreichische Landwirtschaft," *Der Vierjahresplan* 2

(1938): 204–05; Reinhaller, “Ein kostbarer Schatz der Nation’: Der nationalsozialistische Staat hilft dem deutschen Bergbauernrum,” *Nationalsozialistische Landpost*, no. 8, February 23, 1940.

65. See Siegl, *Bergbauern*, 87–91.

66. Ibid., 55, 266, 291. See also Ernst Langthaler, *Schlachtfelder: Alltägliches Wirtschaften in der nationalsozialistischen Agrargesellschaft 1938–1945* (Vienna: Böhlau: 2016), 181–84.

67. See Siegl, *Bergbauern*, 230–31.

68. Langthaler, *Schlachtfelder*, 444–45.

69. Explanation supplied in the entry dated June 19, 1942, titled “Dr. Ing. Reinthal[l]er Landesbauernführer besucht mit 20 Kreisbauernführer[n] das Lager Mauthausen,” in Bertrand Perz, *Verwaltete Gewalt: Der Tätigkeitsbericht des Verwaltungsführers im Konzentrationslager Mauthausen 1941 bis 1944* (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2013), 98–99, here 99. I wish to thank Bertrand Perz for directing me to this source.

70. See Langthaler, *Schlachtfelder*, 156–72.

71. See Ela Hornung, Ernst Langthaler, and Sabine Schweitzer, *Zwangsarbeit in der Landwirtschaft in Niederösterreich und dem nördlichen Burgenland* (Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2004).

72. ÖÖLA, Bestand Sammlungen und Nachlässe 2, Materialien zu NS-Biographien, box 11, “Reinhaller, Anton Reinhaller an den Reichsführer SS, 21.5.1941.”

73. Documents relating to Reinhaller’s requests for the badge for old Nazi Party members can be found in ÖÖLA, Bestand Sammlungen und Nachlässe, box 11, “Materialien zu NS-Biographien, Reinhaller.” See also BArchB, “Parteikorrespondenz, Anton Reinhaller (14.4.1895), Reinhaller an den Reichsschatzmeister der NSDAP, München, 31.5.1939.” This doggedness stands in sharp contradiction to Reinhaller’s postwar attempts to defend himself by emphasizing his expulsion from the party.

74. See “Erste Kriegsverbrecherliste Österreichs,” *Neues Österreich*, December 4, 1945.

75. IfZ-Archiv, ZS 1348, “Anton Reinhaller, Interrogation Nr. 682, 5.2.1945,” IfZ-Archiv, ZS 1348, “Interrogation Nr. 682a, 21.2.1947,” IfZ-Archiv, ZS 1348, “Vernehmung des Zeugen Anton Reinhaller durch Prof. Dr. R.M.W. Kempner, 8.5.1947.”

76. ÖÖLA, NL Reinhaller, “Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, An alle, die es angeht, 3.7.1950,” ÖÖLA, NL Reinhaller, “Reinhaller an Außenminister Karl Gruber, undatiert (1950),” and ÖÖLA, NL Reinhaller, “Reinhaller an Hans Haider, März 1950”; StLA, NL Hartleb, box 12 (Korrespondenzen), “Reinhaller an Karl Hartleb, 5.7.1950.”

77. ÖÖLA, NL Reinhaller, “Diverses, Heft 1,” 1. The archive contains five small notebooks densely filled with handwriting.

78. For a more detailed discussion, see Reiter, *Antisemitismus in der FPÖ*, 140–45.

79. ÖÖLA, NL Reinhaller, “Diverses, Heft 2,” 9–10.

80. ÖÖLA, NL Reinhaller, “Diverses, Heft 3 bis 5.”

81. ÖÖLA, NL Reinhaller, “Gerichte 1945ff, Reinhaller an Bundespräsident Karl Renner, 3.7.1950.”

82. Ibid.

83. ÖÖLA, NL Reinhaller, “Gerichte 1945ff, Volksgericht (VG) Wien an Reinhaller, 10.7.1950.”

84. See Butterweck, *Nationalsozialisten*, 665–71.

85. For a detailed account of the trial, see Schimanko, *Fall Reinthaller*, 42–45.
86. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Gerichte 1945ff, Antrag um Einstellung des Verfahrens, 9.7.1949”; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Eingabe an VG Wien, 6.8.1949.”
87. Numerous documents on this line of defense can be found in OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Gerichte 1945ff.” See also Schimanko, *Fall Reinthaller*, 45–47, 161–63.
88. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Gerichte 1945ff,” Office of Chief of Council for War Crimes, “Paul H. Gantt an Reinthaller, 14.12.1948.”
89. To support this argument, the defense counsel submitted an expert report by Hans Merkel, a former SS member and Darré’s defense attorney in the 1948 Ministries Trial: see Schimanko, *Fall Reinthaller*, 203–40.
90. Cited in Butterweck, *Nationalsozialisten*, 671.
91. Cited in *ibid.*, 666.
92. On Reinthaller’s behavior in court, see *ibid.*, 666–68; Schimanko, *Fall Reinthaller*, 244–50.
93. IfZ-Archiv, ZS 1248, “Anton Reinthaller, Interrogation Nr. 682, 5.2.1947,” 5.
94. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Reinthaller an Hans Haider, März 1950.”
95. Cited in Butterweck, *Nationalsozialisten*, 669.
96. IfZ-Archiv, ZS 1248, “Anton Reinthaller, Interrogation Nr. 682, 5.2.1947,” 7; IfZ-Archiv, ZS 1248, “Vernehmung des Zeugen Reinthaller durch Prof. Dr. R. M. W. Kempner, 8.5.1947,” 21–22.
97. Cited in Schimanko, *Fall Reinthaller*, 249.
98. Cited in *ibid.*, 96.
99. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Diverses, Heft 4,” 2–3.
100. Cited in Schimanko, *Fall Reinthaller*, 97.
101. See Butterweck, *Nationalsozialisten*, 668.
102. Cited in *ibid.*, 670.
103. Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte Wien (hereafter: IZG-Archiv), NL 48, Felix Hurdes, DO 348, Reinthaller folder, “Eidesstattliche Erklärung von Heinrich Gleißner, 29.5.1948”; IZG-Archiv, NL 48, Felix Hurdes, DO 348, “Eidesstattliche Erklärung von Peter Revertera, 10.5.1948.”
104. IZG-Archiv, NL 48, Felix Hurdes, DO 348, Reinthaller folder, “Gemeindeamt Mettmach, Bestätigung 12.5.1948”; IZG-Archiv, NL 48, Felix Hurdes, DO 348, Reinthaller folder, “Pfarramt Mettmach, Bescheinigung 12.15.1948”; IZG-Archiv, NL 48, Felix Hurdes, DO 348, Reinthaller folder, “KPÖ Ortsgruppe Attersee, Bestätigung 17.5.1948.” The many affidavits are examined in more detail in Schimanko, *Fall Reinthaller*, 172–74.
105. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Geschwister Hintermeyer [sic!] an Reinthaller, 15.5.1945”; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Eidesstattliche Erklärung von Rosa Hintermayer [sic!], 17.5.1948.”
106. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Eidesstattliche Erklärung von Johann Exenschläger, 22.5.1948.”
107. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, “Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Eidesstattliche Erklärung von Rosa Hintermayer, 17.5.1948.”

108. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Eidesstattliche Erklärung von Maria Lang, 12.5.1948."
109. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Gnadengesuch an Bundespräsident Theodor Körner, 28.4.1952."
110. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Urteil VG Wien, 26.10.1950."
111. See Schimanko, *Fall Reinthaller*, 293–300.
112. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Gerichte 1945ff, Karl Günther an Otto Tiefenbrunner, 11.5.1952"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Karl Günther an René Marcic, 19.5.1952."
113. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Gnadengesuch an Bundespräsident Theodor Körner, 28.4.1952."
114. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Robert Scheuch an Reinthaller, 27.5.1952"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Reinthaller an Adolf Schärf, 3.6.1952"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Reinthaller an Adolf Schärf, 17.12.1952."
115. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, "Gerichte Deutschland 1945ff, Bescheid der Republik Österreich über Ausnahme aus Verbotsgesetz, 16.6.1953."
116. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Fritz Butschek an Reinthaller, 10.4.1952"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Fritz Butschek an Reinthaller, 31.5.1952"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Fritz Butschek an Reinthaller, 1.4.1953"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Fritz Butschek an Reinthaller, 2.4.4.1953."
117. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Ernst Strachwitz an Reinthaller, 2.4.10.1953"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Ernst Strachwitz an Reinthaller, 29.10.1953."
118. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Stefan Schachermayr an Reinthaller, 25.6.1953."
119. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Roland Timmel an Reinthaller, 30.6.1954."
120. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Bericht Landesverband der Unabhängigen (Egon Plachutta) an Reinthaller, 31.1.1955."
121. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Friedrich Peter an Reinthaller, 8.1.1955"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Friedrich Peter an Reinthaller, 17.1.1955." Peter's career went on to have a steep upward trajectory; within just three years, he had become Reinthaller's successor as FPÖ chairman.
122. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Herbert Kraus an Reinthaller, 31.5.1952"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Herbert Kraus an Reinthaller, 16.6.1952."
123. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Max Stendebach an Reinthaller, 18.4.1953."
124. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Helfried Pfeifer an Reinthaller, 25.1.1954."
125. See Höbelt, *Vierte Partei*, 217–50; Piringer, *VdU*, 111–13.
126. The "Aussee Manifesto" is published in *Österreichische Parteiprogramme 1868–1966*, ed. Klaus Berchtold (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1967), 488–91.
127. Piringer, *VdU*, 116. For the stenographic minutes of the parliamentary debate, see 39. Sitzung des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich, 7. Gesetzgebungsperiode, May 19, 1954, accessed November 22, 2019, www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/VII/NRSITZ/NRSITZ_00039/index.shtml#tab-Sten.Protokoll.
128. See Piringer, *Geschichte der Freiheitlichen*, 17. The party suggested the position of

deputy chairman, but this was not enough for Reinthaller, as he made clear in a memo: "Ver[bands] Tagung Aussee, 13.5.1954," in Höbelt, ed., *Aufstieg und Fall*, 223.

129. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Josef Maria Gutmann an Reinthaller, 20.5.1954."

130. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Resolution des Landesverbands der Unabhängigen in der Steiermark, Landesleitung, 31.10.1954."

131. "Anton Reinthaller an Roland Timmel, 25.3.1954 (handschriftliches Konzept)," in Höbelt, ed., *Aufstieg und Fall*, 218–22, here 220.

132. See Piringer, *Geschichte der Freiheitlichen*, 18.

133. See "Anton Reinthaller an Friedrich Peter, Mettmach, 10.2.1955," in Höbelt, ed., *Aufstieg und Fall*, 250–51.

134. "Handschriftliche Notiz Reinthallers auf dem Brief von Max Stendebach an Reinthaller, 24.9.1954," in *ibid.*, 225.

135. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "VdU-Anfrage zur Besprechung mit Minister a. D. Ing. R., 14.12.1954"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Konzept von Reinthaller (ohne Titel), Dezember 1954"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Reinthaller an Max Stendebach, 27.1.1955."

136. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Konzept von Reinthaller (ohne Titel), Dezember 1954." The adjective *völkisch* was soon dispensed with and replaced with the less loaded terms *national-freiheitlich* (national-liberal) and *freiheitlich* (liberal).

137. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Gerhard Riha an Reinthaller, 30.12.1954."

138. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Komitee zur nationalen Einigung an Reinthaller, 21.12.1954."

139. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Fritz Butschek an Reinthaller, 14.12.1954"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Friedrich Peter an Reinthaller, 17.1.1955" (accompanied by a list of organizations and people in Linz who supported Reinthaller); OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Klaus Mahnert an Reinthaller, 5.1.1955." See also "Egon Plachutta an Anton Reinthaller, Graz, 30.12.1954," in Höbelt, ed., *Aufstieg und Fall*, 229–32, here 231–32.

140. "Emil van Tongel an Anton Reinthaller, Schruns, 9.11.1954," in *ibid.*, 227–28, here 227.

141. See Piringer, *Geschichte der Freiheitlichen*, 28–29.

142. *Ibid.*, 26.

143. On the role of the ÖVP, see Schäfer, *ÖVP*, 70–76.

144. A former Hitler Youth functionary, Griesmayr became, among other things, a leading member of the radical Deutsche Union after the war. He was also indirectly involved in the Naumann affair. See Beate Baldow, "Episode oder Gefahr? Die Naumann-Affäre," (PhD diss., University Berlin "Freie Universität Berlin," 2012); Richard Stöss, *Vom Nationalismus zum Umweltschutz: Die Deutsche Gemeinschaft/Aktionsgemeinschaft Unabhängiger Deutscher im Parteiensystem der Bundesrepublik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1980), 72.

145. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Gottfried Griesmayr an Jörg Kandutsch, 5.1.1955"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Jörg Kandutsch an Gottfried Griesmayr, 26.12.1954."

146. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Gottfried Griesmayr an Reinthaller, 6.1.1955."
147. Cited in OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ I, "Gottfried Griesmayr an Reinthaller, 25.1.1955."
148. See Riedlsperger, *Lingering Shadow*, 150–60; Piringer, *Geschichte der Freiheitlichen*, 17–40; "Freiheitspartei will nicht mit dem VdU," *Die Neue Front*, April 16, 1955.
149. "Einigung der Freiheitlichen," *Die Neue Front*, October 22, 1955.
150. *Parteiprogramme*, 492–93. See also Kurt Richard Luther, "Die Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs," in Herbert Dachs et al., eds., *Handbuch des politischen Systems Österreichs* (Vienna: Manz, 1992), 247–62, here 255–56. "Allegiance to the German *Völk- und Kulturgemeinschaft*" was pledged in all party manifestos until 1985, when it was replaced with a somewhat milder reference to belonging to the German "*Völk- und Kulturraum*."
151. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ II, "Unabhängiger Pressedienst der FPÖ, 2.12.1955." See also "Machtvoller Auftakt der FPÖ in Wien," *Die Neue Front*, December 10, 1955.
152. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ II, "Emil van Tongel an Reinthaller, 20.11.1955"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ II, "Egon Plachutta an Reinthaller, 25.12.1955"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ II, "Karl Heinz Maraschek an Reinthaller, 27.12.1955"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ II, "Herbert Schweiger an Reinthaller, 28.12.1955."
153. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ II, "Friedrich Peter an Reinthaller, 21.12.1955"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ II, "Reinthaller an Friedrich Peter, 29.12.1955"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ II, "Friedrich Peter an Reinthaller, 29.12.1955"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ IV, "Reinthaller an Friedrich Peter, 3.1.1956."
154. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ IV, "Emil van Tongel an Reinthaller, 3.1.1956"; OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ IV, "Emil van Tongel an Reinthaller, 9.1.1956."
155. Cited in Piringer, *Geschichte der Freiheitlichen*, 39.
156. See "Reinthaller gegen Extremismus," *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, July 15, 1955; Reiter, *Inklusion*, 151–52.
157. "Machtvoller Auftakt der FPÖ. Dipl.-Ing. Anton Reinthaller zum FPÖ-Obmann gewählt," *Die Neue Front*, April 14, 1956.
158. See for example "Rundfunkansprache von Reinthaller am 9.5.1956," *Die Neue Front*, May 12, 1956.
159. See Matthias Falter, "Reclaiming the Political Center after National Socialism: The Discursive Repositioning of the Far Right in Austrian (Party) Politics, 1949–60," *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 38, no. 1 (2018): 88–103.
160. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ IV, "Erklärung von Herbert Kraus, 12.4.1956." See also Kraus, *Objektivität*, 285–86.
161. OÖLA, NL Reinthaller, VdU/FPÖ IV, "FPÖ-Bundesparteileitung, Stellungnahme der FPÖ-Pressestelle: Die wahren Gründe für das Ausscheiden des Dr. Herbert Kraus aus der FPÖ, 12.4.1956." See also the opinion pieces and letters to the editor in *Die Neue Front*, April 21, 1956.
162. See "NS-Machtübernahme in der FPÖ," *Linzer Volksblatt*, April 13, 1956.
163. "Der 'Gauleiter-Klub' rührt sich wieder," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 12 and 13, 1956. Apparently, the term "Gauleiter Club" was an allusion to the Naumann affair within the

FDP. Unlike the FPÖ, the FDP really did have some former Gauleiters as members. See Kristian Buchna, *Nationale Sammlung an Rhein und Ruhr: Friedrich Middelhaue und die nordrhein-westfälische FDP 1945–1953* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2010).

164. “Eine neue Naziartei,” *Volksstimme*, October 19, 1955.

165. See “Nachruf: Bundesparteiobmann Dipl.Ing. Reinthaller. Anton Reinthallers letzter Weg,” *Die Neue Front*, March 15, 1958.

166. Peter’s past did not catch up with him until the “Kreisky–Peter–Wiesenthal affair” erupted in 1975. Early in his career, Peter was a right-wing hardliner, but he later became a somewhat “reformed” character: see Reiter, *Inklusion*, 153–54.

167. Höbelt, *Vierte Partei*, 244.

168. Bernhard Weidinger, “Im nationalen Abwehrkampf der Grenzlanddeutschen”: *Akademische Burschenschaften und Politik in Österreich nach 1945* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2015), 532.

169. For a detailed account, see Reiter, *Inklusion*.

170. See Luther, “Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs,” 484–512; Susanne Frölich-Steffen, “Die Identitätspolitik der FPÖ: Vom Deutschnationalismus zum Österreich-Patriotismus” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 33, no. 3 (2004): 281–95.

171. The FPÖ’s links with right-wing extremism earned it a fixed place in the *Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus* (Handbook of Austrian right-wing extremism), which has been published and updated several times by the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands (Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance). See Brigitte Bailer and Wolfgang Neugebauer, “Die FPÖ: Vom Liberalismus zum Rechtsextremismus,” in *Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus*, ed. by Brigitte Bailer and Wolfgang Neugebauer, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Deuticke, 1993), 327–428.