HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Prelude to the Holocaust in Austria

The first section of the book *Wie wir gelebt haben*¹ (How we lived) looks and feels like a handsome family album or scrapbook. These first hundred pages are full of beautiful photographs with personal captions, nostalgic anecdotes, and happy memories. Leafing through without knowledge of the title, one might consider the faces and families to be a typical cross-section of the general population of early twentieth-century Austria-Hungary. Photos from those years show families from places across the empire and many rooted for generations in the imperial capital. World War I soldiers pose for group photos, school classes smile for cameras, and families enjoy the outdoors. Shopkeepers stand in front of their stores, little boys sport lederhosen, and young women wear the fashionable hairstyles of the 1920s.

Little in the pictures reveals that the subjects are Jews. A few shots of children and young adults in costume indicate Purim celebrations, but otherwise these are simply frozen images of families in the first decades of

the twentieth century. With a more careful read of the captions and stories, however, particulars of the Jewish experience in Austria-Hungary come to light. A portrait of young Gizela Brück is positioned alongside a later photo of her with her young husband, Josef Kocsiss. Their daughter, Gisela Eva, provided family background for the publication and explained that her mother had been only twelve years old when she and her family fled the Russians during World War I. Like many other Galician Jews, they sought refuge in Vienna and never returned to Poland. The caption of the second photo indicates that Josef was a gentile; like many Viennese Jews, Gizela had intermarried.²

On another page, Edith Landesmann’s parents pose in Brünn (a city in Moravia, now called Brno), passengers of the ubiquitous cartoon airplane of early twentieth-century studio photography. The caption explains that they first met at the Maccabi sports club.³ Pages later, Gerda Feldsberg’s grandfather Josef Stadler gives the camera a puzzled look as he stands in front of his shop window. He and his wife, Emilie, ran a store in Vienna’s second district while they lived in the ninth.⁴ As was the pattern of Viennese Jewry, home and business focused on the Leopoldstadt—the traditionally Jewish second district—and, once a level of financial success had been achieved, the newly prosperous moved their residence to the ninth to live among many other middle- and upper-middle-class Viennese Jews.

The book contains the family photos of Austrian Jews who returned to or stayed in Vienna after the Holocaust and includes their memories as gathered in the Jewish historical institute Centropa’s extensive interview collection. Contributors shared pictures and told stories to help editors portray their families’ experiences. The collection clearly depicts the variety of origins from which so many Jews living in Vienna came. At the start of the 1900s, Jews from across the empire migrated to the capital city, where

². Ibid., 26.
³. Ibid., 37.
their families may have lived for decades. Some came to pursue a university education and gain professional training; others fled antisemitic Russian troops during World War I. Their diverse backgrounds combined to reflect the multiethnic and multinational tapestry of the greater population of the Habsburg Empire.

In many ways, Austrian Jews were—and had been—typically Austrian. Joseph Samuel Bloch, rabbi, member of the Imperial Parliament, and publisher of the Jewish newspaper Österreichische Wochenschrift (Austrian weekly), had argued as early as 1886 that Jews were the most loyal citizens of the monarchy and represented the ideal Austrians in a multiethnic society facing a rise of nationalism. “If one could construct a specifically Austrian nationality, then the Jews would constitute its foundation,” Bloch observed just nineteen years after Jews were accorded full emancipation and citizenship rights.

Jews had lived in Austria for centuries. After the Revolution of 1848, the monarchy lifted settlement restrictions, and Jews from Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary, and Galicia migrated to the capital with a feeling of safety in a modern Vienna. They finally received full emancipation in Austria following the Ausgleich (the reorganization of the Habsburg Empire into the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary) in 1867, and such movement continued and intensified.

But as the Jewish population of the city increased, antisemitism neither disappeared nor diminished, and the issue of nationality and nationalism grew across the Habsburg lands and among its citizens. Jews were blamed for the May 1873 stock market crash, for example, and increasing prejudice gave rise to politicians with particularly antisemitic philosophies. The late nineteenth century saw the rise of Georg Ritter von Schönerer’s

Pan-German Party and its platform based on German nationalism, popular antisemitism, and a larger unified German state, of which Austria would be a part through Anschluss with Germany and German-speaking regions of Europe. By blaming Jews for all societal problems, the Pan-German Party helped propel antisemitism into the realm of racism. Antisemitism also played a significant role during Dr. Karl Lueger’s term as mayor of Vienna (1897–1910). Lueger, a Christian Social Party member, was not a German nationalist, however, but rather an Austrian patriot, loyal to the monarchy.

Austrian sentiment in the years leading up to World War I focused largely on loyalty and a dedication to maintaining the monarchy but included no specifically “Austrian” national feeling. Most identified with a particular Austrian province alongside an allegiance to the empire, and many identified with a German cultural nationality. The idea of the political organization of independent German-speaking states, however, had roots that dated back to the fall of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. With the 1848–49 German Revolution, these deliberations intensified into the Großdeutsche/Kleindeutsche Debatte. The Habsburg Empire had favored a großdeutsche Lösung (Greater German solution), which would in its understanding include the German states and the entire empire under Habsburg leadership. The kleindeutsche (Lesser German) solution, promoted by Prussia, sought to unify just the northern German states and did not include Austria. Prussia opposed the integration of the non-German portions of the Habsburg Empire, and the kleindeutsche Lösung prevailed. Although the concept of Anschluss had this long, popular history, only a small minority hoped to split the empire to unify with Germany at that time. Certainly no

one anticipated the post–World War I dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the creation of a separate, small Austrian state.

Despite antisemitic hostility, Jews in Vienna found their way through the challenging environment. According to historian Marsha Rozenblit, Jews’ propensity to work with other Jews and the establishment of their own professional organizations helped protect and insulate them from the discriminatory climate, although it also served to inhibit total assimilation into Viennese society.12 Most lived in the first, second, and ninth districts of Vienna, along with their coreligionists of varying social classes, where they also socialized with and mostly married one another.13 Jews both maintained a separateness and distinction and also contributed to and took on significant roles in Viennese society, culture, and professions through the career and educational opportunities that opened to them in the some sixty years following the Ausgleich and the attainment of equal rights of citizenship. They integrated into society with enthusiasm, and many enjoyed great success, leading to a common misconception of widespread conversion to Catholicism and overall assimilation in that short time.

The pervasive presence of antisemitism notwithstanding, by the turn of the century Vienna’s Jews identified as thoroughly Viennese. Survivor Helen Herz recounted that her family was Jewish by religion only and that “one had nothing to do with the other.”14 Marsha Rozenblit’s theory of Habsburg Jews’ tripartite identity helps explain this phenomenon. Bolstered by the protection and acceptance they felt under Emperor Franz Joseph in the years leading up to and through World War I, Austrian Jews considered themselves to be politically Austrian, culturally German, and ethnically Jewish.15 In addition, Rozenblit explains that in Vienna “Germanization” did not require melding to or with a German Volk, or concept of an ethnic

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12. Rozenblit, Jews of Vienna, 49.
13. Ibid., 71.
“people,” as the Viennese were less preoccupied with German national identity. In addition, I posit that a fourth aspect of identity emerged in the specific case of the Jews of Vienna, one to which Rozenblit alludes: a feeling of being socially and aesthetically Viennese. The possibility for that layering in self-identification was (and is) possible in Vienna in particular. Gentile or Jew could be Austrian and also distinctly—and perhaps more importantly—Viennese, which speaks to the ever-present ambiguities typical of the Viennese mind-set and way of life. One could feel both Austrian and German while remaining a loyal monarchist, while others felt both Austrian and German but favored Anschluss, the joining of Austria and Germany to unite Germans living in different but neighboring lands. With similar intersection and potential contradiction, Jews could be 100 percent Viennese but also Austrian, German, and Jewish at the same time and in different ways.

Jews supported the waging and fighting of World War I, which Rozenblit has characterized as a Jewish holy war that provided the possibility for Jews to focus on Russia as an enemy both of their country and of themselves as Jews. It also gave rise to the opportunity to show fidelity to the empire and solidarity and support for their coreligionists who suffered oppression and brutal, deadly pogroms in other lands. Tens of thousands of Jewish refugees fled the Russians and the war to Vienna, where the Jewish community and the Austrian state supported them. This influx of Jews from the east compounded wartime hardships, such as food shortages and increased black-market activity, which conspired to raise antisemitism among the general public. With the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire at war’s end, Jews and other minorities suffered in newly defined nation-states, and common belief held that Jews were unable to maintain any national loyalty.

Contrary to outside perceptions of a unified body devoted only to itself or a larger concept of a Jewish “nation,” divisions marked the Jewish community and its members. Viennese Jews found no one amalgamating political stance, and the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien (IKG; the Jewish

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16. Ibid., 33.
18. Ibid., 78.
The community of Vienna) suffered struggles between Western Jews and Ostjuden (Jews from the eastern parts of the former empire), the religious and nonreligious, the modern and the traditional Orthodox, and between assimilationists and Zionists.\(^\text{19}\) While some Jews turned to Zionism, others rejected the idea of a particular Jewish nationalism and clung to hopes that the shrunken post–World War I state would permit them the possibility of identifying as both Austrians and Jews, even if they were unable to consider themselves a part of a German Volk.\(^\text{20}\) Still, they realized that the days of their tripartite Austrian-Jewish-German identity were over and that their future in the First Austrian Republic was uncertain.

The end of the empire was particularly difficult for Austrians. Many remained loyal to the lost monarchy, but its dissolution fostered a focus on identification with a larger German cultural nation.\(^\text{21}\) By February 5, 1919, all political parties in Austria were in favor of Anschluss with Germany,\(^\text{22}\) despite the Versailles peacemakers’ prohibition on the unification of the two countries. And, save for the Social Democratic Party, antisemitism remained pervasive in politics in Vienna.\(^\text{23}\) The Social Democrats held majority-governing power in the capital from the end of World War I to 1934, and their policy making in Vienna was taken as a model by the Socialist Internationale and around the world.\(^\text{24}\) The party did not enjoy the same success in other parts of Austria, however, and resentment grew in the provinces. Hostility focused on liberal spending on the social welfare system and


the party’s alleged control of organized labor. These views yielded the city’s moniker, Rotes Wien (Red Vienna).25

Jews in Austria felt uncomfortable with the newly defined state and worried about their status within it. Most Jews in Vienna grieved the end of the monarchy, even while some anticipated greater democracy in the new political constellation; and Galician Jewish refugees in the city feared that they were doomed to remain foreigners in their adopted home.26 The community remained strong nonetheless, and by 1934, the Jewish population of Vienna totaled 176,034.27

At the same time, Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists were rising to power in Germany. With the end of the Weimar Republic and President Paul von Hindenburg’s appointment of Hitler as chancellor on January 30, 1933, the Third Reich launched and began to assert power with the arrest and detainment of political opponents. Official anti-Jewish practice began with a state-sponsored boycott on Jewish professionals and Jews’ businesses, followed by antisemitic legislation with increasing restrictions on Jews. Austrians knew what was unfolding in neighboring Germany. The Tausend-Mark-Sperre (Thousand Mark Tax) imposed on Germans crossing the border into Austria brought home some economic realities that clarified Hitler’s awareness of Austria’s dependence on German tourism and effectively showed his control and impact.28 In addition, mass unemployment and wage decline, inflation, and industrial problems followed by a banking crisis colluded to foment dissatisfaction in the Austrian provinces and led some to the growing National Socialist movement. The Alpine regions’ newly impoverished middle class, which depended on German tourism and demand for agricultural goods, applauded the possibility of unification with Germany and provided grass-roots support for the Austrian Nazi Party, the

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Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei (German National Socialist Workers’ Party, or DNSAP). Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss and his Christian Social Party, however, opposed Anschluss and favored a specifically “Austrian” identity. They did not aspire to join Greater Germany because they recognized Austria as a “second German state” and, as a Catholic one, the better of the two.

Dollfuss merged the conservative Catholic and Austrian nationalist Christian Social Party in 1933 with other like-minded groups and the paramilitary Heimwehr (literally, Home Guard) to form the Vaterländische Front (Fatherland Front). With the support of Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, the Front sought to maintain a distinct and separate Austria, protecting the nation’s Catholic nature from influence by Protestant Germany and the Nazi Party. Dollfuss outlawed both the Communist and Nazi Parties, and political struggles between the Heimwehr and the Social Democrats evolved into violence in the streets. After a short but bloody civil war fought in February 1934 between the paramilitary troops of the two parties, Dollfuss declared the Social Democratic Party illegal as well. In July, he fell victim of an attempted Nazi putsch. Although unsuccessful in the move to take over the government and initiate Anschluss, Nazi revolutionaries assassinated the chancellor. Karl von Schuschnigg succeeded him.

and continued to lead the Fatherland Front, staving off National Socialism for another four years.

Sometimes described as Catholic fascism, the Austrofascist dictatorship eschewed Nazism altogether. Modeled on and aligned with Mussolini’s form of fascism, the Austrofascists looked to Italy as their closest ally, a relationship that Austrian leaders miscalculated. Italy could not help Austria escape increasing German pressure and impending Anschluss, a point on which the Austrian Communist and Social Democratic Parties’ positions differed—the Communists opposed unification with Germany, and the Social Democrats endorsed it. In fact, Dr. Karl Renner, the Social Democratic chancellor and minister of foreign affairs for Austria from 1918 to 1920 and president of Parliament from 1931 to 1933—later, the first postwar president of Austria—was a vocal supporter of Anschluss with Germany in 1938.33 Weighed against the Austrofascist dictatorship’s oppression of his

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party, unification with Germany seemed a viable option that might favor the Social Democrats’ political and strategic position.

An agreement signed by Schuschnigg and German ambassador Franz von Papen on July 11, 1936, helped to strengthen Austria’s illegal Nazi Party with its release of Nazis imprisoned in Austria and the promise of Germany’s respect for Austria’s sovereignty. After Schuschnigg’s humiliating meeting with Hitler at Berchtesgaden in 1938, where the German dictator demanded the legalization of the Nazi Party in Austria and the admission of more Nazi representatives into Austrian government, Schuschnigg called for a plebiscite to be held on March 13. His plans foiled by the Anschluss, he resigned on March 11, 1938. He had spent the preceding years trying to prevent what became the inevitable, including a last-minute effort to hold a vote on the question of Austrian independence. In anticipation of the referendum, devotees painted political slogans in favor of the Fatherland Front on streets and sidewalks around Vienna, graffiti that just a few days later would play an emblematic role in the particular Viennese persecution of Jews. Hitler ended Schuschnigg’s talk of a referendum with a telephone call to inform the Austrian chancellor of what was to come, and Schuschnigg stepped down with a farewell radio address that he concluded with, “God protect Austria.” Austrian National Socialist Arthur Seyss-Inquart assumed power immediately, and German troops rolled in on March 12, 1938, to seal the Anschluss—the union of the two nations into Greater Germany.³⁴

The Nazis maintained the ban on the Social Democrat and Communist Parties and increased pressure against and the persecution of their members, as well as the leaders of the Schuschnigg government. Arrest as a political opponent of the Nazis meant deportation to concentration camps, where Social Democrats and Communists were imprisoned side by side with their former Austrofascist oppressors. Schuschnigg himself survived incarceration as an enemy of the state. Arrested and jailed in Gestapo headquarters on March 13, 1938, he remained in Nazi hands through the end

of the war, including more than three years in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and shorter stints in both Flossenbürg and Dachau. With the Nazis also came increased antisemitic measures and rhetoric, and many Jews as well as both Jewish and gentile Communists and Social Democrats looked to leave Austria.

POST-ANSCHLUSS REALITIES

Few Austrian Jews had yet realized the importance of fleeing to safety by the time of the Anschluss. Despite their awareness of what was unfolding in Germany, many still thought such maltreatment and oppression impossible in their country. How wrong they were: for Jews, Austria in spring 1938

35. Tracing and Documentation file for Dr. Kurt Schuschnigg, 1.1.5.1/98922135/ITS Digital Archive, USHMM, Washington, DC. In 1947, Schuschnigg emigrated to the United States, and from 1948 to 1967 he taught as a professor at Saint Louis University. In 1967, he returned to Austria and lived the next ten years near Innsbruck.
proved much worse than Germany. With the quick change of power came anti-Jewish violence, plunder, and persecution on a massive scale. Nazi Germany absorbed Austria into Großdeutschland (Greater Germany) and renamed the new province composed of the former country the Ostmark (literally, eastern march). Most individuals and certainly the IKG recognized the need to leave immediately. Austrian gentiles enthusiastically welcomed German troops and quickly turned against their Jewish neighbors, along with—and with scant need for encouragement from—the government and the police. Historian Gerhard Botz has argued that in addition to Austrian antisemitism, the material interests of the Viennese fueled the persecution of Jews, a pattern similar to that which emerged in east-central and eastern Europe.36 Many Austrian gentiles stood to benefit greatly from the subjugation and exploitation of their Jewish neighbors.

Historian Paul Schatzberg referred to the violence and bedlam after the Anschluss as “The Vienna Pogrom of Spring 1938,”37 a reference to the November Pogrom, the commonly accepted turning point of state-sponsored persecution of Jews in the Third Reich. If the public destruction and anti-Jewish violence of November 9–10, 1938, constituted a new level of radicalization in the persecution of Jews in Germany, it was a marker of continuity in Austria.38 Anti-Jewish violence had begun with the Anschluss, along with so-called wild Aryanization, which occurred when gentile members of the general public forcibly took their Jewish neighbors’ property outside of the state-structured “Aryanization” program. Although the intensity of such persecution eased a bit that summer, it reaccelerated in early October when the Nazis arrested Jews and wrecked many Jews’ businesses.39 From October 14 to 20, 1938, Nazi supporters conducted pogrom-like riots against synagogues and prayer houses, including setting on fire

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39. Pauley, From Prejudice to Persecution, 286.
the Leopoldstädter Tempel (Leopoldstadt synagogue). The fire department extinguished the blaze, but less than a month later, antisemitic arsonists burned the synagogue to the ground. Historian and journalist Doron Rabinovici has explained the more brutal nature of the November Pogrom in Vienna, as compared with other cities in the Third Reich, as an outcome of these early episodes of violence and theft—by November, Viennese inhibitions had already been overcome. Gentiles had witnessed Jewish colleagues’ dismissal from jobs, “Aryanization” organized and regulated by the government, and the deportation of Jewish men to concentration camps in Germany. After the Anschluss and well before November 1938, the Nazis had accused Jews, rightly or wrongly, of supporting Schuschnigg

Historical Context

and forced Jews to scrub from the city streets and sidewalks the political slogans in favor of Schuschnigg and the Vaterländische Front in acts of humiliation.42 The many historical photographs of Jews scrubbing the Vienna streets on their hands and knees reflect this particular form of persecution and harassment.

The Nazis began to administer control in Vienna in the context of the particular frenzy of Austrian antisemitic violence and theft following the Anschluss. In 1938, Nazi policy against Jews involved the expropriation of their property, exclusion from professional and social circles, and forced emigration. The Nazi-defined body of Jewish Austrians included those who had converted to Catholicism and were considered “non-Aryan Christians.” Regardless of personal religious identification, they too fell victim to Nazi racial laws, and thus Austrian Jews targeted for persecution totaled about 201,000.43

The IKG under the Nazis

Within days of the Anschluss, the thirty-two-year-old SS Untersturmführer (second lieutenant) of the Sicherheitsdienst (Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers-SS, the intelligence agency of the SS and the Nazi Party) Adolf Eichmann arrived in the city and began to coordinate the administrative machinery that targeted Austrian Jews. Nazi officials entered IKG headquarters on the Seitenstettengasse in Vienna’s first district for the first time on March 16, 1938, to assess the organization and, while they were at it, plunder office supplies and other goods. They deemed the IKG “nonessential” two days later and raided and shuttered its offices.44 They also arrested a number of Viennese Jewish community leaders, including Dr. Josef Löwentherz, a lawyer and the former vice president of the community.45 Eichmann met with representatives of various Jewish organizations and conveyed that

42. This punishment interestingly originated with the Fatherland Front itself. It had punished illegal Nazis caught painting political slogans in this way. See Giles MacDonogh, 1938: Hitler’s Gamble (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 50.
43. Moser, Demographie der jüdischen Bevölkerung Österreichs, 18–19.
44. Rabinovici, Instanzen der Ohnmacht, 69.
the systematic expulsion of Austrian Jews stood as the Nazis’ primary goal. The IKG would continue to exist but in a different form.46

By the end of April 1938, Eichmann was set up at Gestapo headquarters in the Hotel Metropol, made contact with imprisoned Jewish community leaders, and appointed Löwenherz to head that body. Löwenherz’s first item of business, Eichmann told him, was to devise a plan for the emigration of twenty thousand destitute Jews from Austria within the year, and Löwenherz would remain in jail until he had done just that.47 Eichmann freed Löwenherz on April 20, 1938,48 and ordered the IKG offices to reopen on May 2, 1938. All Jewish organizations fell under its umbrella, each forced to contribute to the work of carrying out the devastating task of coordinating the mass emigration of Viennese Jews.49 With Löwenherz at the helm, IKG staff cooperated, as they accepted this as their community’s only chance for survival.

As historian Ilana Offenberger has explained, the IKG became the central lifeline for Vienna’s Jews. Under its new orders, it assumed the management of all Jewish affairs in the city, both public and private. With an emphasis on emigration and a newly formed Auswanderungsabteilung (Emigration Department), IKG staff offered assistance with all aspects of the process, from recruitment and administration to providing advice and funding. The community cared for its members as they faced great hardship, providing food, shelter, clothing, work, education, medical care, and much-needed leadership. Offenberger argues that the IKG’s support bolstered the Jewish community’s strength and brought them together.50

Reichskommissar für die Wiedervereinigung Österreichs mit dem Reich (Reich’s Commissioner for the Unification of Austria with Germany) Josef Bürckel announced the establishment of the Nazi Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung (Central Office for Jewish Emigration, or Central Office) on

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47. Ibid., 65.
48. Rabinovici, Instanzen der Ohnmacht, 82.
49. Ibid., 85.
50. Offenberger, Jews of Nazi Vienna, 78.
August 20, 1938, and named Dr. Franz Stahlecker, the head of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) of the SS-Oberabschnitt Donau (Danube SS Region), as its director. In practice, however, Adolf Eichmann ran the organization. The Central Office oversaw all administrative processes of the forced emigration of Austrian Jews, including the supervision of Jewish political organizations and occupational retraining centers, and served as a model for methods used throughout Greater Germany. In addition, the Nazi practice of commandeering Jewish community leadership to carry out the regime's intended dirty work evolved into the establishment of Judenräte (Jewish councils) in ghettos in the east.

Forced Emigration

The main goals of the IKG were to move as many members of the community as possible to safety abroad, to provide support and instruction prior to their departure, and to care for the elderly and the ill who were unable to leave. On Eichmann’s orders, the Kultusgemeinde created the Emigration Department to organize, finance, and manage the entire process of emigration, all under the control of the Central Office. Registration for flight under the IKG’s auspices began with a four-page questionnaire submitted to the Emigration Department to declare such intentions and to provide information that included biographical and financial details, the status of an applicant’s and his or her dependents’ identification documents, and any others necessary for departure, as well as potential locations for their emigration abroad. IKG staff researched and provided information about

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52. Safran, Eichmann’s Men, 31.
53. Ibid., 33.
54. Rabinovici, Instanzen der Ohnmacht, 82. For more about the Nazi development of Jewish administrations in communities and eventually in ghettos, see Dan Michman, The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos during the Holocaust (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
55. This department handled immigration needs to all countries except Palestine, for which the Pal-Amt (Palestine Office) had been established. See Offenberger, Jews of Nazi Vienna, 82.
possible destinations and educated hopeful émigrés on the Nazi demands placed on them before their departure from the Reich, as well as different countries’ requirements for entry.

Many potential places of refuge sought to admit agricultural workers and qualified craftspeople, while the United Kingdom, for example, wanted young and middle-aged women to serve as domestic workers. The Emigration Department coordinated and delivered relevant training programs and language classes to prepare eager émigrés. Kultusgemeinde leaders secured and managed funding from foreign Jewish aid groups for use in complying with Nazi decrees, financial and other, and provided social welfare to their members. The IKG encouraged Jews to emigrate under the auspices of the Emigration Department and therefore in accordance with the regulations of the Central Office. It assured its members that leaving the country was their only option, urged the younger generation to leave elderly parents behind, and advised parents to send children to safer locations.

Securing the clearance to leave Austria often proved more difficult than obtaining the permission to do so. Émigrés needed visas to enter a foreign country, but to get one, they typically had to provide an affidavit with the promise of support by a friend or relative at that destination, as well as proof of official approval to leave the Reich. The exit process instituted by the Nazis involved hefty fees and special tax requirements, the payment and the certification of which took time to secure. On top of the interminable lists of the Nazis’ arbitrary and extensive requirements for documentation to depart legally and long waits at government offices, those seeking to emigrate endured lengthy queues at the embassies and consulates of countries to which they hoped to go.

57. Offenberger, Jews of Nazi Vienna, 76.
58. For example, see Zionistische Rundschau, May 27, 1938.
59. In Flight from the Reich, Déborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt note an unanticipated result of the lengthy queues at offices in Vienna: an opportunity for young people to earn money
The Nazis also required Jews to register their property for official expropriation as yet another required step in the process of leaving Nazi Austria. “Wild Aryanization” in Vienna at the time of Anschluss and afterward had shown the regime the need to regulate the confiscation of Jews’ assets. The Nazis counted on the appropriation of the Viennese Jewish community’s and individual Jews’ wealth, and Austrians had already plundered too much. The “Law on the Registration of Jewish Assets” of April 26, 1938, led to the establishment of the Vermögensverkehrstelle (Assets Transfer Agency), which served the needs of official “Aryanization” and expropriation policies through the registration of Jews’ assets and their subsequent facilitation to “Aryan” ownership. All those who were recognized as Jews under the Nuremberg racial laws and in possession of assets valued at more than five thousand Reichsmark had to file a Vermögensanmeldung (property registration form), a four-page questionnaire detailing the type and sum of the person’s total assets, to be completed in triplicate. With this information and the work of the Assets Transfer Agency, the Nazi state obtained the precise records needed for the systematic expropriation of Austrian Jews’ wealth.

The acquisition of a valid passport posed a particular set of difficulties. With the Anschluss, Austrians had become citizens of the Greater German Reich. Their passports suddenly invalid, they had to replace them with German documents. Many born outside the First Republic, in parts of the Habsburg Empire that had since become independent countries, had obtained neither formal citizenship nor a passport during the interwar years and were required to apply for the latter at the embassy of the country of their birth. To add a further layer of difficulty, the Nazis also required that Jews’ passports be stamped with a red J for Jude (Jew)."
Documents that certified the forfeiture of assets to the Nazi state and proved payment of taxes were valid for one year, as were the quota numbers granted to refugees, visas, passports, and the affidavits they had secured from friends or family in destination countries. If it took more than eleven months to acquire the many documents necessary, departure had to take place in weeks or even days, or the first received certificates would expire. This happened frequently and forced refugees to start their entire emigration process over again.

Immediately after the Anschluss, Austrian Jews sensed the need to escape. The violence and oppression that had escalated gradually over the course of five years in Germany seemingly erupted overnight in Austria, and Jews confronted a stark reality. As persecution intensified, as the Nazis arrested Jewish men, and because of the IKG’s encouragement and direction, more families set their sights on emigration, and the Jewish community accelerated its work. By October 1938, the Central Office had received applications from 43,336 heads of households representing a total of 117,979 people seeking to leave Austria.62 The following month’s devastating November Pogrom brought home the unrelenting nature of Nazi persecution, plunder, and violence. The work of the IKG’s Emigration Department intensified, and community leaders pressed parents to respond to the United Kingdom’s willingness to accept Jewish children from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. News of Nazi violence and persecution during the November Pogrom had prompted public sympathy and governmental response in Great Britain. With the permission of the British, Dutch, and Swedish governments, aid organizations across Nazi Germany and Austria organized Kindertransporte to send unaccompanied children under the age of seventeen to the west on trains that crossed through Germany and into the Netherlands, where the children boarded boats to sail for England. The Anglo-Jewish community organized financial and human resources to

provide foster families, children’s homes, and other hospitality for caring for the refugee children.

And indeed, from the start of May 1938 through December 31, 1939, the IKG helped 117,409 Jews to flee. By November 11, 1941, a total of 146,816 (of the 206,000 Austrian Jews estimated to be living in Austria as of May 2, 1938) had emigrated to other countries. The mass emigration of community members remained the IKG’s main goal. When that proved challenging, it facilitated transmigration to locations to which people could more immediately travel and that were—or appeared to be—transit points to further destinations. The IKG helped support refugees in passage and provided financial assistance with the support of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint or the JDC).

Major concerns for potential émigrés included not only funding but also factors such as climate, language, and employment opportunities in the desired destination. Men with professional contacts around the world tried to secure positions abroad, and many families contacted relatives in other countries. Jews resorted to scouring telephone books from across the globe for anyone with the same family name in search of even a remote kinship connection. As the Nazi yoke tightened particularly on men and the traditionally male realms of professional life, women assumed new responsibilities in leading their families to safety.

New Gender Roles

The persecution and arrest of many male Jewish heads of household forced women into new positions of family responsibility. With their husbands in Dachau and Buchenwald, wives assumed control of their families’ futures,

63. Ibid.
64. Wolfgang Muchitsch, Österreicher im Exil: Großbritannien 1938–1945; Eine Dokumentation, ed. Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1992). Jonny Moser finds the estimate of 206,000 Austrian Jews to be about 5,000 too high and comes to the total of 201,000. See his calculations and explanation in Moser, Demographie der jüdischen Bevölkerung Österreichs, 18–19.
65. Offenberger, Jews of Nazi Vienna, 132.
66. Dwork and van Pelt, Flight from the Reich, 122.
which included attempts to find safety outside Austria. In the book *Between Dignity and Despair*, Marion Kaplan illuminates the experiences of Jewish women in Nazi Germany and the gender role reversal that occurred within their families under the Nazis. Austrian Jewish women reacted and responded similarly when the same persecution and oppression befall their communities and families.

As Kaplan has pointed out, women often saw the need to flee sooner and more clearly than men did. In Vienna, too, their interactions in the community brought them into contact with their gentile neighbors in everyday situations, and they felt the atmosphere of hostility and antisemitism more keenly than did men who mainly worked with other Jewish men and remained in largely Jewish social circles. Kaplan has argued that German men felt more at home with German culture and politics, and many Jewish veterans of World War I mistakenly reasoned that their military service would prompt protection from the state. Men were “more German” than women were in their sense of patriotism and in their specific training and education in Germany. And just as German Jews believed that their Germaness would save them, Austrian Jews also thought of their Austrianess as protection.

When Austrian Jews encountered the onslaught of persecution immediately after the Anschluss, many wives saw with sober lucidity the reality that they confronted and the colossal task before them and worked to organize their families’ emigration. They chose destinations, navigated the bureaucratic requirements involved with their families’ departures, handled the sale of businesses and properties, and otherwise made decisions that they would not have taken previously. Many of them did all this with the urgent burden of the endless work needed to secure the release of husbands imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps. Charlotte Czuczka arranged and submitted all the paperwork involved in freeing her Viennese husband, Fritz, from Buchenwald, including providing the Gestapo and camp administration with

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68. Ibid., 65–66.
photographs of the tickets purchased for the family to sail to the United States. When she failed to hear from Fritz or from the camp authorities in the specified amount of time, she first telephoned the Gestapo in Vienna and then called the main Berlin Gestapo office to investigate. An officer assured Charlotte that he would settle the matter within forty-eight hours, and shortly thereafter she received a telegram from Fritz informing her that he was on his way home. He was released from Buchenwald on February 18, 1939, and arrived at Vienna’s Ostbahnhof (East Train Station) the following morning. Charlotte, Fritz, and their son, George, sailed for New York a month later.

Kaplan has argued that female identity was more family oriented, and once women realized their position as the only person left to defend their traditional realm of home and family, they took on all that their husbands could not. Women reacted and responded in new ways, with new assertiveness, and with authority in traditionally male roles in order to preserve and maintain their *familial home*, the traditionally female sphere. For many, preserving home ultimately meant fleeing, which required moving to a new place of security. All that they organized and managed served to protect their traditionally female familial responsibilities but required the additional assumption of formerly male obligations to do so.

**Lands of Exile**

Austrian Jews fled around the globe to places as distant and diverse as Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, China, Syria, Lebanon, the United States, Turkey, Venezuela, the West Indies, and Cyprus. Many others managed to escape to other European countries, the lucky ones to the United Kingdom or other places that were not later invaded and occupied by the Germans. Palestine stood as the destination for 14,093 Austrian Jews, 1,000

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69. Fritz Czuczka Buchenwald prisoner file, 1.1.5.3/5715087/ITS Digital Archive, USHMM.
71. Registration documents of returnees, A/VIE/IKG/III/BEV/Rück/1/2, Das Archiv der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien (IKG Archive), Vienna, Austria.
of whom transited through Slovakia and Hungary; nearly 12,000 arrived there.\(^\text{72}\) A total of 37,710 Austrian Jews fled with hopes of reaching the United States, including 8,130 who traveled through a third transit country and 200 who finally settled in Mexico.\(^\text{73}\) For many, Shanghai emerged as an unlikely last resort. Neither visa nor medical exam was required to travel there—one needed only to sign a waiver acknowledging an understanding of the medical risks of traveling to and living in the Far East.\(^\text{74}\) The first Austrian Jews arrived in Shanghai in August 1938,\(^\text{75}\) and a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) document reveals that, of the 16,300 European Jews who found refuge in Shanghai, 4,298 of them were Austrians.\(^\text{76}\)

Labor camps in Karaganda in Kazakhstan became another improbable place of survival. As historians Débórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt note in *Flight from the Reich*, “internment camps proved a harsh blessing for those who escaped to the Soviet Union.”\(^\text{77}\) When the Red Army invaded the Baltic states in the summer of 1940, the Soviets refused to recognize as victims of the Nazis the Austrian and German Jewish refugees who had fled there. Rather, they saw them as German citizens in Soviet territory, and when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Russian Security Police arrested and deported all foreigners.\(^\text{78}\) Thus, Social Democrats and Communists who had fled the Nazis, and some who earlier had fled the Austrofascist regime, found themselves interned in Siberia

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72. Jonny Moser writes that 1,000 Austrian Jews who fled with hopes of reaching Palestine ended up in Mauritius and another 1,107 in Yugoslavia. Moser, *Demographie der jüdischen Bevölkerung Österreichs*, 76. As an illustration of the difficulties of establishing confirmed statistics on Austrian Jewish emigration, it should be noted that Hugo Gold reports that only 9,195 Austrian Jews emigrated to Palestine between March 13, 1938, and mid-November 1941. See Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien: Ein Gedenkbuch* (Tel Aviv: Olamenu, 1966), 133.

73. Moser, *Demographie der jüdischen Bevölkerung Österreichs*, 79.


76. Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich*, 318.

77. Ibid., 244.

78. Joint correspondence about Karaganda internees, April 8, 1947, 3.i.1.3/78788142/ITS Digital Archive, USHMM.
and, later, in or near Karaganda. Refugees lived and worked in labor camps, where many remained until the possibility of remigration after the war.79

An estimated 28,250 Austrian Jews found refuge in the United Kingdom.80 A number of politically affiliated Jews went with party comrades; others found their way to their respective parties once in exile. After the British government responded to the November Pogrom by opening its doors to Jewish children from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, many parents sent their children to live with foster families in the United Kingdom. Single women (and some married) secured positions as domestic servants, while others somehow got work via contacts in their fields. Once in Britain, young men joined the armed forces, as did many Jewish refugees in the United States, and thus later took an active part in liberating Europe and their former homes from Nazi oppression.

An IKG summary of 1940 reported that a total of 123,490 Glaubensjuden (those who identified as religious Jews) had emigrated by the end of that year.81 After the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, however, opportunities for emigration dwindled, but the Nazis continued to force IKG employees to provide lists and reports related to the status of the Jewish community and its members. By the spring of 1941, the purposes that required such data changed. Instead of information employed in the organization of Jews’ flight from the Third Reich, the regime turned to utilize it in the facilitation of the deportation of Jews to the Nazi-occupied east. The first transports from Vienna forced 1,584 Jews to Nisko in October 1939, and deportations to the east continued through March 19, 1945. The Nazis expelled Austrian Jews to destinations such as Opole, Kielce, Modliborzyce, Lagow, Opatow, Lodz, Kovno, Minsk, Riga, Izbica, and Wlodawa, as well


80. According to Jonny Moser, of 31,250 Austrian Jews seeking to flee to the United Kingdom, 3,000 ended up in other countries in North and South America, as well as Australia. Of the total, 3,500 reportedly traveled through a third (European) transit country. Moser, Demographie der jüdischen Bevölkerung Österreichs, 74. Hugo Gold reports that a total of 128,500 Jews fled Vienna to other countries between March 13, 1938, and mid-November 1941, and 30,850 of them went to England. Gold, Geschichte der Juden in Wien, 133.

as the death camps of Sobibor and Auschwitz. But the vast majority of Austrian Jewish deportees—more than 15,000—arrived in Terezín sometime between June 1942 and March 1945.\textsuperscript{82}

Nonetheless, an additional 6,000 Austrian Jews managed to escape in 1941,\textsuperscript{83} but only after extraordinary measures were taken to have them exempted from the transports that began in spring 1941, transports that historian Helga Embacher has argued marked the moment at which the IKG became a completely powerless tool of the Nazis.\textsuperscript{84} As of June 30, 1941, 44,000 Jews remained in Vienna.\textsuperscript{85} After the mass deportations in October 1942, the Nazis removed the IKG’s legal status under public law and, as of November 1, 1942, renamed the remaining group of leaders the Ältestenrat der Juden in Wien (Jewish Council of Elders in Vienna), tasking them with the support of the fewer than 8,000 Jews remaining in Vienna,\textsuperscript{86} as well as the oversight of organizations that served so-called non-Aryan Christians.

Jews who remained in Vienna lived in protected situations that included marriage to a gentile, being a so-called Mischlinge (literally, mongrels—those with a partially Jewish heritage) or a product of such a union, and employment with the Ältestenrat, while others survived the war in hiding. Of some 201,000 Jews in the capital city before the Anschluss, 146,816 had managed to emigrate, an estimated 135,000 of them to safety and out of reach of further Nazi domination. The Nazis had systematically expropriated their property and assets, forcing them to leave with little financial means and few personal belongings. In the end, the Nazis murdered some 65,000 Austrian Jews, but the great efforts of the IKG employees working under incredible pressure from their Nazi oppressors had led to the

\textsuperscript{82.} Ibid., 80–83.
\textsuperscript{83.} Rabinovici, Instanzen der Ohnmacht, 229.
\textsuperscript{84.} Helga Embacher, Neubeginn ohne Illusionen: Juden in Österreich nach 1945 (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1995), 27.
\textsuperscript{85.} Rabinovici, Instanzen der Ohnmacht, 297.
\textsuperscript{86.} At the beginning of 1943, there were only 7,989 Jews left in Vienna, and by December, the number had dwindled to 6,259. Of these, 1,080 belonged to another confession, 85 were foreign, and 5,094 lived in mixed marriages. Statistics from the Ältestenrat der Juden in Wien, “Bericht über die Tätigkeit im Jahre 1943,” as cited in Rabinovici, Instanzen der Ohnmacht, 116.
emigration and thus the possibility of survival for more than 65 percent of the Jewish community.87

In the opening section of Wie wir gelebt haben, illustrations of typical Jewish family life in the Habsburg Empire—which is to say, images of typical family life in the Habsburg Empire—continue chronologically to representations of Jewish families’ experiences under the Nazis. The second section, “Holocaust,” makes clear that in fact this volume does not constitute a collection of photos reflecting happy and fond memories but rather depicts aspects of the stark reality of what became of many Jews of the former empire who fell victim to Nazi oppression, persecution, and ultimately genocidal policy. The activities and struggles of refugees in points of exile across the globe are illuminated, along with the faces of murdered family members. A few photos even reveal the hard life of internees in the Opole ghetto.88

The closing chapter of Wie wir gelebt habe, however, returns to parallel the opening in that it again reveals the experiences of (now specifically) Viennese Jewish families and thus in many ways mirrors those of typical Viennese families. This final portion, “Das Leben nach dem Holocaust” (Life after the Holocaust), depicts lives reestablished in Vienna—for many, their hometown—and a resumption of life in postwar Austria, after the Holocaust and the destruction of European Jewry. Those pictured were among the few thousand Austrian Jews who reestablished lives, homes, and families in the capital.

87. After the war, Ältestenrat leaders (particularly Josef Löwenherz and Benjamin Murmelstein) came under intense criticism, and some people accused them of collaboration with the Nazis. Doron Rabinovici argues against such a judgment, and I agree with his assertion that Jewish community leaders were at the absolute mercy of their Nazi oppressors and were “authorities without power.” See Rabinovici, Instanzen der Ohnmacht, 36.

88. The Nazis established a ghetto in Opole, Poland, in March 1941 and concentrated Jews from Poland, Austria, Slovakia, and France there under horrible conditions. The ghetto was liquidated and the residents deported in the spring of 1942, Lilli (Schischa) Tauber’s parents among them. During their internment, her parents sent letters and photographs to relatives in Vienna. One aunt survived the war and afterward gave them to Lilli, who submitted them for inclusion in Centropa’s publication. Lilli’s parents were deported from Opole to either Sobibor or Belzec, where they were murdered. See Eckstein and Kaldori, Wie wir gelebt haben, 164–67.
Holocaust survivors living in Vienna today contributed the photos in this section and indeed in the entire book. They show everything from one young man’s excited and smiling face just before departure from Palestine to return to his hometown to joyous occasions in postwar Vienna, including weddings and picnics. We see the proud owners of new cars, as well as entrepreneurs posed in front of businesses—new ones and, in a few cases, those restituted to them. By the time these photos were taken, the empire was a memory, as was the Third Reich and “Greater Germany.” Austria had returned to its post–World War I form of a “rump state” of some eight million citizens and had regained its name, no longer the Nazi German province the Ostmark. Much like the pictures of the first section, these reveal a cross-section of Jewish family life in the former imperial capital and show that Jewish family life in the postwar era also closely reflected the lives of all Viennese residents.

Most of those who are pictured in Wie wir gelebt haben represent the subjects of this book—those who returned and reestablished lives in Vienna after the Red Army’s conquest of the city and during Allied occupation. They were among the concentration camp survivors and exile returnees from abroad who resumed and reestablished lives in their hometown, along with some who had somehow survived in the city during the war and its aftermath. All had apprehensively awaited the war’s end from various points around the globe, including those still in Vienna who listened as Soviet troops rolled in. And it is the context of some one thousand years of Jews living in this region, through all of Austria’s incarnations, that frames the deep, although ambivalent, connection that many returnees felt toward the city as their home.