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The Jewish Response to Antisemitism in Austria Prior to the Anschluss

In Austria, during the period of the monarchy as well as in the First Republic, from the late nineteenth century till 1933, antisemitism was not only part of the silent consensus but was loudly expressed by the bourgeois parties. Both Christian Socialists, the major conservative political faction, and German Nationalists, the movement which sought the creation of a Greater Germany, along with the implementation of antisemitic and anti-clerical policies, competed in their hatred of Jews. Even the Social Democrats were not immune to the enemy image of the *Jud* (Jew) and used anti-Jewish caricatures in their propaganda.¹

In 1897 Karl Lueger, who launched the first antisemitic mass movement in the capital, won the mayoralty of Vienna on a radically anti-Jewish platform. His concept of success became Hitler's populist model. It was in Austria that Hitler's worldview had been shaped. He turned elements of two political trends of the middle class into his theory and practice: racial German nationalism found in the all-German movement of Georg Ritter von Schönerer and charismatic leadership of the masses and antisemitic populism, inspired by Karl Lueger.²

In order to understand Jewish responses to antisemitism, let us offer some details about the Jews in Austria at the time: Vienna was the German-speaking city with the largest portion of Jews in its population. In the bureaucratic and dynastic center of the reactionary Catholic Habsburg monarchy, the "Jew" was perceived as the leading representative of social change, a symbol of modern times as well as of old monotheism. In Vienna, the residential capital of a multinational state, Jews, who lived in a hub of various nationalisms and coerced assimilation, became the target of all prejudice.

Note: This text is based on the author's study: *Instanzen der Ohnmacht: Wien 1938–1945. Der Weg zum Judenrat*. Frankfurt/Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000. Translated also as: *Eichmann's Jews – The Jewish Administration of Holocaust Vienna, 1938–1945*. Transl. N. Sommers. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.

1 Cf. L. Spira, *Feindbild "Jud": 100 Jahre politischer Antisemitismus in Österreich* (Vienna: Löcker, 1981).

2 Cf. B. Hamann, *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (Munich: Piper, 1997); D. Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht: Wien 1938–1945. Der Weg zum Judenrat* (Frankfurt/Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000); H. Witek and H. Safrian, *Und keiner war dabei: Dokumente des alltäglichen Antisemitismus in Wien 1938* (Vienna: Picus, 1988), 13.

The greater part of the Jewish population came from the eastern regions of the monarchy. Of the 175,000 Jews who lived in Vienna in 1910, no more than one-fifth were born in the capital.³ Most were without a secure income: only a minority were members of the bourgeois middle class and even fewer belonged to the upper class.

According to the census of 1934, there were 191,481 Austrian Jews—2.8 percent of the total population. On March 11, 1938, only 185,028 were said to be still in the country, although the stream of Jewish refugees from the Third Reich flowed non-stop.⁴ The regional Zionist association, the *Zionistischer Landesverband*, was subdivided into eighteen sections. In total, there were 82 Zionist groups, with 12,000 members.

The politically liberal, “non-national-Jewish” *Union of Austrian Jews* had approximately 3,000 members.⁵ Twenty-four associations were devoted to nurturing science and culture. For decades, the *Union of Austrian Jews* had been the strongest faction in the Viennese Jewish Community, the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien*. The name is no coincidence. The word Jewish was not acceptable to the monarchy because the Jews were expected to assimilate. Officially, the religion was therefore Mosaic, not Jewish. The *Union of Austrian Jews* reigned supreme the most in the *Kultusgemeinde* until 1932.

In the first postwar elections in 1920 it gained 20 of the 36 mandates. However, the ratios soon changed, leading to coalitions of various parties. In 1924, the *Union* formed an election bloc with the middle-class *General Zionists* and the Orthodox *Adass Jisroel*, excluding the newly established *Social Democratic Party*, the religious social *Zionists of the Misrachi* and the Orthodox *Beth El*. In 1928 the election alliance shifted again. The *Union* and *Adass*, jointly, were able to obtain 18 of the 36 mandates.⁶ Both Jewish factions dissociated themselves from any Zionist, that is, national Jewish self-definition.

Declaring that it was a “non-national-Jewish” party, the *Union* proudly proclaimed that it wished to represent “not Austrian Jews but Jewish Austrians.”⁷ It

3 Cf. H. P. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna 1918–1938* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 5, 211.

4 Cf. H. Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung: Die Juden in Österreich, 1938–1945* (Vienna: Herold, 1978), 13.

5 Cf. Überblick über das jüdische Organisationswesen im Lande Österreich, Josef Löwenherz an Adolf Eichmann, Wien, 4. Jänner 1939; Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, A/W 165, 1.

6 Cf. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna*, 219.

7 Cf. J. Ornstein, ed., *Festschrift zur Feier des 50-jährigen Bestandes der Union Österreichischer Juden* (Vienna: Union Österreichischer Juden, 1937), 61, 65.

was not that the *Union* did not want to take a self-assured Jewish position, nor was it by any means an advocate of assimilation, but it defended the Austrian state and hoped for equality under constitutional law and emancipation on the tide of progress. The *Union of Austrian Jews* tried to counter antisemitism in the courts of law, or through interventions and appeals to politicians. Its attempts to come to terms with discrimination and prejudices demonstrate how they had faith in the institutions of state. Although it sought to counter antisemitism with patriotism, to the antisemites, as well as to the majority of society, Jews could never become “true Austrians.” Many Jews were supposedly assimilated, but paradoxically, the term “Assimilanten” was only used for people who were regarded as Jews by the majority of Austrians.

The *Union's* decline was a consequence of frustration with the notion of an emancipatory utopia in an antisemitic society. In the end, the *Union*, which had once counted on an alliance with liberal parties, had to beg “reactionary” anti-liberal, Christian Social politicians for protection from ruthless antisemitism.⁸ On the federal level, many Jews now supported Social Democracy,⁹ while they turned to Zionist positions within the *Kultusgemeinde*.

In 1932, the *Union* lost supremacy in the *Kultusgemeinde*. Previously, the bloc consisting of the liberal *Union* and the anti-Zionist *Adass Jisroel* had formed an election alliance with the non-Zionist Social Democrats. In 1928, the Social Democratic faction still consisted of both Zionist and non-Zionist members. The Jewish Socialists supported Social Democracy in Austria and Jewish Zionist workers in Palestine. However, in 1929 the trends separated due to controversy over the *Kultusgemeinde's* budget. The governing coalition chaired by the *Union* had decided to transfer funds to the Yishuv, the Jewish settlement in Palestine. The Socialist Zionists supported these donations, while their non-Zionist partners preferred to use the funds for the welfare of the Viennese community.¹⁰

The nature of the political discourse had changed: in the early 1920s, following a phase of revolutionary class struggle throughout Central Europe, a civil administration of Union, Orthodox, and Zionists had been formed; in 1928 the *Union* and *Adass Jisroel* united to form an Austro-patriotic coalition; in 1932 an election bloc consisting of the *Union* and *Adass Jisroel* joined the non-Zionist Social Democrats to form a non-Zionist alliance.

In 1932, the Zionist Socialists alone obtained almost as many votes as they had won together with the Social Democratic List in 1928. The great majority

8 Cf. *ibid.*

9 Cf. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna*, 10.

10 Cf. *ibid.*, 103–9.

of Socialist Jews had cast their ballot for the Zionists. All Zionist factions gained votes, and they assumed the presidency of the *Kultusgemeinde*.

The oppositional *Union of Austrian Jews* complained that the Zionists' seizure of power was "mainly indebted to the [...] election right of the foreign Jews."¹¹

Indeed, part of the *Union* was made up of a majority of "western Jewish," namely, Austrian, Hungarian, and Czech families, while many Zionists were "eastern Jews," originating in places such as Galicia.¹²

The Zionists advocated a different way of countering antisemitism and discrimination. In 1920, in his function as Zionist delegate to the National Council, Robert Stricker, a leading Zionist personality, introduced a bill recognizing Jewish nationality. His proposal unleashed a storm of indignation in the *Union*. The *Union* feared that such ideas would reinforce antisemitism due to the wish for differentiation. Independently of the Zionist bill, the antisemitic politician Leopold Kunschak too had demanded a law for discrimination against Jews and Jewesses as a foreign minority.¹³ Thus, the Zionist movement was reacting to the antisemitic reality of Austria. It should be noted that after 1945, Leopold Kunschak became one of the founders of the Christian Democrat *Österreichische Volkspartei*; he stated then that in spite of the Nazis and though having been in a concentration camp himself, he was still proud to be an antisemite.

Zionism in Austria and Germany was not a rejection of German culture but a search for Jewish self-awareness. Whereas the *Union* strove to show antisemites that Jews were loyal Austrians, the Zionists wanted to prove them wrong by turning Diaspora Jews into a nation. Austrian and German Zionists wanted to establish a Jewish state in Palestine more as a haven for distressed Jews of Eastern Europe than for their own personal needs.

The position of a powerful *Bund*, namely, an independent Jewish national workers movement that was not Zionist, remained limited in Eastern Europe. The *Bund* did not exist in the German-speaking area,¹⁴ and left Zionism attracting most of the Socialist members of the community.

11 "Bericht des Präsidiums und des Vorstandes der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien über die Tätigkeit in den Jahren 1933–1936" (Vienna, 1936), 26–27, cited in Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 311.

12 See, for instance, Leo Landau, in "Wien von 1909 bis 1939. Mitglied des Vorstandes der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde," report given to Dr. Ball-Kaduri, January 28, 1959 and February 22, 1959; Yad Vashem, 01/244; 6.

13 Cf. H. Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien* (Tel Aviv: Olamenu, 1966), 49.

14 Cf. J. Bunzl, *Klassenkampf in der Diaspora: Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1975).

The *Union of Austrian Jews* did not reject the Palestine settlement project. In addition, it maintained the hope of “rebuilding Erez Israel.” But its Jewish self-understanding was different: it continued to trust in emancipation as the way to overcome anti-Jewish prejudice. In contrast, while Zionist groups fought antisemitic discrimination and sought civic equality and political integration in Austria, they did not expect protection through emancipation. While the *Union* defined itself as “non-national-Jewish,” the Zionist movement refrained from demanding recognition as part of the state’s nation and demanded a return to Jewish identity. The *Union* fought the struggle against antisemitism in Austria in the courts of law and with enlightening publications. In the same vein, the Zionist *Wiener Morgenzeitung*, headed by Robert Stricker, attacked open antisemitism.¹⁵ The *Union* argued in its publications that antisemitic stereotypes of the Jews were incorrect; they claimed, for instance, that the Jews had been brave soldiers in World War I. The young community rabbi Benjamin Murrelstein, later a Jewish Elder in *Theresienstadt*, wrote a book protesting an antisemitic pamphlet by Severin Grill, who had denounced the Talmud. The book was published by the *Union of Austrian Jews*, and the foreword was written by Viennese Chief Rabbi David Feuchtwang.¹⁶

Beyond internal political squabbling, Jews—whether Zionist or not—who did not intend to combat antisemitism with words alone, also got organized. The *Union of Former Jewish Front-Line Soldiers*, whose members always stressed their patriotism, organized militias for defense against Nazi attacks. One year after its founding in 1932, the Soldiers Union had 8,000 members. On the High Holidays, 800 of these former soldiers protected synagogues from assault by National Socialist gangs of thugs. Some were wounded during the clashes, others were arrested.¹⁷

Several Jewish organizations in Austria tried to challenge the canard that Jews were cowardly and not “satisfaktionsfähig” (i.e., not qualified to pick up the gauntlet). Zionist Jewish youth in the sports club *Hakoah* strove to prove the physical prowess of Jews and Jewesses.¹⁸ Arthur Koestler wrote about the militant Zionist student associations: The goal of these fraternities was to prove that in fighting duels, boozing, singing, and boasting, Jews knew how to stand their ground like anyone else.

15 Cf. Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, 50.

16 Cf. B. Murrelstein, *Einige Fragen an Prof. Dr. P. Severin Grill O. Cist. Verfasser der theologischen Studie “Der Talmud und Schulchan Aruch”* (Vienna: Union Österreichischer Juden, 1935).

17 Cf. Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, 62.

18 Cf. J. Bunzl, *Hoppauf Hakoah: Jüdischer Sport in Österreich von den Anfängen bis in die Gegenwart* (Vienna: Junius, 1987).

Both Zionists and non-Zionists tried to contradict and to fight the stereotypes but mostly in vain. A conflict that took place in 1934 illustrates the opposing stands between the Zionist and non-Zionist parties in the *Kultusgemeinde*. A governmental decree separated non-Jewish and Jewish pupils in a part of the Viennese school system. Collective Jewish classes were about to be instituted. A protest lodged by the presidency of the *Kultusgemeinde* on September 19, 1935, had had no impact and denominational segregation in schools remained in place. The Zionist community leadership therefore changed tactics and decided, instead of common studies, to push for independent Jewish schools. They were successful and in the same year a Jewish elementary school was opened.¹⁹

In an interview conducted in 1992, Raul Hilberg recalls his school days back then:

After all, you should not forget that already before the Anschluss life was quite difficult here for the Jewish population. There was a rumor, for instance, that separate desks for Jewish pupils would be set up. Therefore, my parents sent me to a Jewish grammar school; as my mother said, if someone has to sit at a Jewish desk, it is far better to go straight to a Jewish grammar school. Back then I was 9 years old...²⁰

Hilberg's mother, like many members of the community and finally also the community leadership, had changed their minds when confronted with social antisemitism and political discrimination.

The *Union*, nevertheless, continued to insist on public Austrian schools since it feared the Jewish national character of an independent institution of education no less than it did state discrimination.²¹ The Orthodox *Adass Jisroel* welcomed the governmental decree, which it perceived as an initial step toward purely denominational Jewish schools.²² *Adass Jisroel* defined itself as being of Jewish denomination and of Austrian nationality. In their opinion, the Jewish religion's view of a "people" did not accord with the modern idea of a nation. *Adass Jisroel* tried to counter Christian Social antisemitism by stressing religious values and explaining that Judaism was neither a race nor a nation but merely a faith. In 1936, the Zionist factions were extremely successful in the elections, and the *Union* ceased to be the strongest Jewish party.

In 1934, Austrian democracy was abolished and the Christian Socialists, the only remaining party, formed a dictatorship. The regime was ambivalent toward

¹⁹ Cf. Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 14.

²⁰ Interview with Raul Hilberg in *Die Presse*, December 5, 1992. Translation by the author of this article.

²¹ Cf. *Festschrift*, 66.

²² Cf. *Jüdische Presse*, October 5, 1934.

the Jews. While the Austrofascists and the *Ständestaat*, the so-called “Corporate State,” which was an authoritarian one-party state, granted the Jews protection from Hitler, antisemitic discrimination grew so vehement that the US government had to intervene, and on November 13, 1934, Nahum Goldman paid a visit to Mussolini on behalf of Austria’s Jews.²³ The policies of the antisemitic minister of education and chairman of the Christian Socialist Party, Emmerich Czermak, barred the Jewish intelligentsia from teaching, research, and the arts. On the other hand, in a typical Austrian compromise the government appointed a Jewish representative, the president of the *Kultusgemeinde*, Desider Friedmann, to the State Council.²⁴

The Vienna *Kultusgemeinde* had to deal with Nazism and its ramifications even before the Anschluss in 1938. After the Nazis came to power in Germany, the Jewish community was faced with the consequences of Nazi government policy. The suppression of the Jews in Germany had a direct impact on the IKG in Vienna. Refugees from the German Reich streamed to Austria and had to be supported. Moreover, the anti-Jewish discrimination in Germany exacerbated the antisemitic witch hunts and exclusion from jobs in Austria.

On September 25, 1935, the *Israelite Kultusgemeinde Vienna* sent the community rabbis a letter stamped “confidential.” Although the situation in Austria was not the same as in Germany, said the letter, the *Kultusgemeinde* felt the need to articulate a warning similar to that issued in Germany, which pertained not only to the holidays “but to the behavior of Jews in the streets and in public places in general.”²⁵

In July 1936, Austria signed an agreement with the German Reich, which, among other concessions, allowed the release of imprisoned July Putsch insurgents and the inclusion of the Nazi contact men into the government. Antisemitic discrimination saw a rise in the one-party state. The Zionist movement in Palestine was alarmed by newspaper reports about anti-Jewish incidents and discriminatory measures in Austria at the beginning of 1936. On January 22,

23 Cf. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna*, 195–203; Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 14–15; Gold, *Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, 64.

24 Cf. Freidenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna*, 193; A. Staudinger, “Völkische Konkurrenz zum Nationalsozialismus—am Beispiel des ‘Österreichischen Verbandes für volksdeutsche Auslandarbeit’,” in *Fünfzig Jahre danach: Der “Anschluß” von innen und außen gesehen*, ed. F. Kreissler (Vienna/Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1989), 52–64; A. Staudinger, “Abwehr des Nationalsozialismus durch Konkurrenz: Zur Kulturpolitik im Austrofaschismus,” in *100 Jahre Volkstheater: Theater, Zeit, Geschichte*, ed. E. Deutsch-Schreiner (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1989), 34–87.

25 Cf. Rundschreiben der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde, signed by Desider Friedmann and Emil Engel, Vienna, September 25, 1935, Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, P151/8.

two Zionist officials of Austrian origin went to the Austrian consul general in Jerusalem and challenged the diplomat with the latest wave of dismissals of Jewish employees from public office and the firing of the Jewish president of the Chamber of Lawyers.²⁶

Shortly before the Anschluss, the entry of German troops in March 1938, a group of Jewish youths took up target practice at the Sievering quarry. After the National Socialists came to power, Jews were chased through the streets not only by individual gangs of thugs but also by the antisemitic mob and by militant National Socialist party groups. When the state authorities took action against the Jews, the youth Willy Stern, for example, hurried to get rid of his weapon. Stern dismantled the pistol and threw it into the Danube River. Within hours the young Jewish defense force had dissolved itself.²⁷

After the National Socialist seizure of power all attempts at countering antisemitism had to be relinquished. Despite antisemitic fantasies, the Jewish community was not an independent, alien element within the Austrian population but an integrated and heterogeneous minority.

The Viennese Jewish community leadership supported Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg against Hitler. When the Austrian government fixed a date for a plebiscite concerning the future of the Austrian state in order to counter pressure from Berlin, the *Kultusgemeinde* raised a considerable sum to support it.²⁸ It pinned its only hope on the continued existence of the Austrian state and was anxious to secure its own existence by means of patriotic conduct and civic loyalty. What happened in 1938 is known;²⁹ the pictures of Hitler arriving in Vienna are

26 Cf. Dr. Egon Michael Zweig, Jerusalem, to Dr. Oskar Grünbaum, Vienna, January 22, 1936, Zionist Archives Jerusalem, S25–9817.

27 Cf. Willy Stern, interview with the author, Vienna, May 2, 1991.

28 Cf. Witek and Safrian, *Und keiner war dabei*, 41; Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht*.

29 See, for instance, G. Anderl, “Emigration und Vertreibung,” in *Vertreibung und Neubeginn: Israelische Bürger österreichischer Herkunft*, ed. E. Weinzierl and O. D. Kulka (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 1992), 167–338; G. Botz, *Wohnungspolitik und Judendeportation in Wien 1938–1945: Zur Funktion des Antisemitismus als Ersatz nationalsozialistischer Sozialpolitik* (Vienna/Salzburg: Geyer, 1975); Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands, ed., *Jüdische Schicksale: Berichte von Verfolgten*, vol. 3 of *Erzählte Geschichte: Berichte von Widerstandskämpfern und Verfolgten* (Vienna: ÖBV, 1992); Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, ed., *Trotz allem... Aron Menczer 1917–1943* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 1993); A. Jensen, *Sei stark und mutig! Chasak we'emaz! 40 Jahre jüdische Jugend in Österreich am Beispiel der Bewegung “Haschomer Hazair” 1903–1943* (Vienna: Picus, 1995); A. Jindra, “Vertreibung und Entrechtung der Juden Wiens im Jahre 1938” (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1990); E. Klamper, *Auf Wiedersehen in Palästina: Aron Menczers Kampf um die Rettung jüdischer Kinder im nationalsozialistischen Wien* (Vienna: Bundeskanzleramt/Bundespressdienst, 1996); A. Leonhartsberg, “Das Leben der österreichischen Juden zwischen 1938 und 1945” (diploma thesis, University

famous. The Jewish community was not prepared for the upcoming persecution. They did not hide their register. They tried to educate the Austrian public about Judaism to combat prejudices by exhibitions, books and articles. They tried to convince the antisemites of their patriotism. They turned to antisemitic Christian Social politicians to protect them from Nazis. These were not very successful projects as we know. The Austrian government did not want to fight the Third Reich and the Austrian National Socialist movement. The so-called “Anschluss of Austria” took place from the outside and from within. Under pressure from Berlin, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, who had been a member of the Austrian government since 1936, took power in March 1938. The National Socialists already controlled several provincial cities and anti-Jewish pogroms in Vienna began even before the German troops invaded. Schuschnigg resigned as chancellor, stressing that he did not want to shed any German blood.

Vienna, the city that was once the center of German speaking Jewry, a cradle of modernity and haven of emancipatory hopes for the Jews of central Europe turned into a nightmare. As we have seen, in the monarchy as well as in the First Republic, antisemitism belonged not only to the silent basic consensus but to the loudly proclaimed creed of most parties. Antisemitism in Vienna assumed a political dimension and for the first time, elections were won on an antisemitic political platform. Antisemitism was not just a tacitly agreed general mood but the overt credo of the bourgeois parties.

of Vienna, 1986); J. Moser, “Die Entrechtung der Juden im Dritten Reich: Diskriminierung und Terror durch Gesetze, Verordnungen, Erlasse,” in *Der Judenpogrom: Von der “Reichskristallnacht” zum Völkermord*, ed. W. H. Pehle (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1994), 118–31; J. Moser, “Nisko: The First Experiment in Deportation,” *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 2 (1985): 1–30; J. Moser, “Österreichs Juden unter der NS-Herrschaft,” in *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich 1938–1945*, ed. E. Tálos, E. Hanisch, and W. Neugebauer (Vienna: ÖBV, 1988), 185–98; L. Moses, *Spaziergänge. Studien und Skizzen zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, ed. P. Steines (Vienna: Löcker, 1994); Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht*; M. Ronzoni, “Lebensverhältnisse der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Österreich zwischen Herbst 1938 und Frühling 1939: Unbearbeitete Gesuche von jüdischen Österreichern” (diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1985); Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*; H. Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer* (Vienna/Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1993); K. Stuhlpfarrer, “Antisemitismus, Rassenpolitik und Judenverfolgung in Österreich nach dem ersten Weltkrieg,” in *Das österreichische Judentum: Voraussetzungen und Geschichte*, ed. A. Drabek et al. (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1974), 141–64; K. Stuhlpfarrer, “Nationalsozialistische Verfolgungspolitik 1938 bis 1945,” in *Wellen der Verfolgung in der österreichischen Geschichte*, ed. E. Zöllner (Vienna: ÖBV, 1986), 144–54; B. Ungar-Klein, “Bei Freunden untergetaucht: U-Boote in Wien,” in *Der Pogrom 1938: Judenverfolgung in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. K. Schmid and R. Streibel (Vienna: Picus, 1990), 87–92; H. Witek, “‘Arisierungen’ in Wien: Aspekte nationalsozialistische Enteignungspolitik,” in *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich 1938–1945*, ed. E. Tálos et al. (Vienna: ÖBV, 1988), 795–816; Witek and Safrian, *Und keiner war dabei*.

The Jewish organizations and parties tried to find strategies against the rise of antisemitism. For decades, the “non-Jewish-national” politically bourgeois liberal-minded *Union of Austrian Jews*, the strongest fraction in the Viennese Jewish Community tried to counter antisemitism at the court or through appeals to politicians. In the attempt to come to terms with discrimination and prejudice, it trusted in the institutions of the state. It believed in Jewish emancipation and patriotism. The Zionist parties gained the supremacy in the *Kultusgemeinde* in 1932 and refrained from striving for recognition as part of the state’s nation. They demanded a return to Jewish identity.

Several cultural and social Jewish organizations tried to challenge the prejudice against Jews. They tried to prove strength and courage. But no Jewish strategy was able to overcome the antisemitic furor, to stop the anti-Jewish discrimination and propaganda of the Austrian dictatorship since 1934, let alone to prevent the rise of National Socialism.

But the Austrian situation prior to 1938 may help us to understand the situation in Nazi Vienna. The German troops marching into Austria on March 12, 1938, were met by cheering crowds. Never again was the invading army to be greeted with such unflagging enthusiasm as it crossed a border. The Nazis did not have to fear general opposition to their Jewish policy in Austria. On the contrary, the authorities could count on a mass of profiteers and sympathizers; at the same time, they underestimated the zeal with which their policies would be pursued. The Jews of Vienna were not victims of a policy coming from without. The excessive response and the plundering, which were quite different to what had happened in Germany, contributed to the distinctive ambiance in Nazi Vienna. Moreover, they had already started before the German troops crossed the border.

The Jewish community had placed all of its hopes against the national socialist threat in the continued existence of the Austrian state and attempted to safeguard its existence through patriotic compliance and loyalty but in vain. It could not rely on the solidarity of the non-Jewish population. The Jews of Vienna were made to realize suddenly that the Vienna that they had regarded as their home had in fact become a trap.

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