The Social Background to Austrian Literature in Exile in Great Britain after 1938

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The forced migration of Austrians to Britain after the Anschluss consisted predominantly of Austrian Jews, together with a much smaller number of those opposed to National Socialism on political and moral grounds. Remarkably few of the historians who have written on this topic take proper account of the indisputable fact that Britain ranked alongside the USA as one of the two most important pre-war countries of refuge for Austrians fleeing Nazism. Wolfgang Muchitsch, in his indispensable volume *Österreicher im Exil – Grossbritannien 1938-1945*, gives the figures for those Austrians who found refuge in Britain before the war as 27,293 (the figure given by Jewish organizations to the Nazi authorities in November 1941) or alternatively as 30,850 (the figure arrived at by a post-war study).[1] More Jewish refugees from Austria came to Britain as their first country of refuge than to any other, with just over 30,000 coming here and just under 30,000 going to the USA, far more than to anywhere else; the figure for the USA subsequently exceeded that for Britain, as refugees migrated on from here to America as so-called 'transmigrants' and as the outbreak of war between Britain and Germany closed off the escape routes to this country.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that something like one in six of Austria's Jews found refuge in Britain, and that something like one in four of those who survived the Nazi years (which was about two thirds of Austrian Jewry) survived by fleeing to Britain. It is generally accepted that Jews made up some 90% of the refugees from Nazism, though it is impossible to arrive at an exact figure, as British records do not differentiate between Jews and non-Jews. The non-Jews were mostly political opponents of the Nazis, and many of them returned to Austria after 1945; they therefore play a relatively small part in the story of the post-war settlement of refugees from Austria in Britain, unlike the Jewish refugees, most of whom chose not to return to Austria.

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[1] Wolfgang Muchitsch, *Österreicher im Exil. Grossbritannien 1938-1945: Eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1992), p.8.

The first condition determining the very existence of an Austrian emigration to Britain was British immigration policy, which enabled the refugees from Austria (by then stripped of their Austrian nationality and largely subsumed under the category of refugees from the Reich) to enter Britain in the first place. It is not necessary to enter into a general discussion of British immigration policy here, as it has been very fully studied in the standard works by A.J. Sherman and Bernard Wasserstein.[2] What needs to be studied are the consequences for the refugees from Austria that resulted from the change in British immigration policy that took place in 1938, allowing the entry of hitherto unprecedented numbers of refugees from Nazism into the U.K. Prior to the Anschluss, the number of refugees from the Reich admitted to Britain had been under 10,000. Refugees arriving at British ports were greeted by the intimidating figure of the immigration officer, who could be expected to refuse them entry; if admitted, they were usually admitted on a temporary basis and were not permitted to work. All of this acted as a strong deterrent to would-be entrants.

It was the Anschluss and its aftermath that transformed the situation. The anti-Semitic excesses that accompanied the installation of the Nazi regime in Austria were fully documented at the time, not least by the British journalist G.E.R. Gedye,[3] and they have remained a prominent feature in the autobiographies and memoirs of refugees. The level and intensity of anti-Semitic violence and open terror in Vienna clearly distinguished it from the situation in the German cities. This is evident in those of the interviews conducted for the book *Changing Countries: The Experience and Achievement of German-speaking Exiles from Hitler in Britain from 1933 to Today* (by members of the London-based Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies)[4] that tell the stories of refugees from Austria, for example Stella Rotenberg, Nelly Kuttner and Erika Young, the last-named being the daughter of a prosperous Catholic and monarchist family horrified at the scenes she witnessed. George Clare's vivid description in *Last Waltz in Vienna* of an orgiastic outburst of anti-Semitic violence in that city is the more

[2] A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich* (Ilford: Frank Cass, 1994; original edition London: Elek, 1973), and Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).
[3] See the account of the interwar years that he spent in Central Europe in G.E.R. Gedye, *Fallen Bastions: The Central European Tragedy* (London: Gollancz, 1939).

striking for the contrast with Berlin, where to his amazement Jews could still walk around freely in 1938.[5] One might say that Vienna acted almost as a prototype for the radical intensification of Nazi persecution of the Jews that occurred in rapidly escalating phases from 1938.

The result was that foreign consulates in Vienna were besieged by Jews desperate to leave Austria. Britain was a favoured choice, not least because it seemed safe against German expansionism and enjoyed a reputation for tolerance and liberalism. Where Britain was exceptional, however, was in the loosening of its immigration policy that took place in 1938/39, at a time when most other countries were tightening the restrictions that they imposed on refugees from Nazi-controlled territory. Whereas Britain had accepted less than 10,000 refugees in the five years from 1933 to 1938, in the eighteen months between the Anschluss and the outbreak of war it admitted over 50,000, a remarkable rate of increase. It was, obviously enough, the Jews from Germany and Austria who benefited from this, and of these the Jews from Austria benefited most, if benefit is the word to use, given that they were subjected to extreme levels of anti-Semitism from March 1938 and their German fellow Jews only from November 1938: this difference of eight months represents almost half of the precious period of grace during which it was possible, though never easy, for Jews from the Reich to enter Britain. This presumably goes a long way to explaining the high proportion of Jews from Austria to be found among the Jewish refugees from the German-speaking lands who settled in Britain – an important point for all those studying the Jewish refugee community here.[6] One must also bear in mind that a considerable number of German Jews had emigrated before 1938, the vast majority to countries other than Britain.

After the Anschluss the British government introduced a visa system to control the flood of refugees seeking to enter the country from Austria. The visa system, as we have already seen, certainly did not cause the number of refugees from the Reich to diminish. In one way, it tended to facilitate entry to Britain. For now refugees arriving at

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[4] *Changing Countries: The Experience and Achievement of German-speaking Exiles from Hitler in Britain from 1933 to Today*, ed. by Marian Malet and Anthony Grenville (London: Libris, 2002).
[5] George Clare, *Last Waltz in Vienna: The Destruction of a Family 1842-1942* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 195f. and 208f.

British ports with visas could not be turned back by immigration officers; though visas were not easy to obtain, possession of one did guarantee the owner entry. Take the case of Hanne Norbert, later to marry the famous refugee actor Martin Miller. She was acting in Innsbruck at the time of the Anschluss and swiftly took a train for England, only to be refused entry and returned to France, where she remained until her parents reached Britain. They had a visa that included her, however, and she was then admitted to Britain without any difficulty.[7]

The visa system also played a key role in determining the composition of the Austrian emigration to Britain, as it favoured some groups of potential refugees while disadvantaging others. Obvious beneficiaries were the Jewish children who were admitted to Britain without visas on Kindertransports, of whom over 2,000 came from Vienna. Visas could be obtained relatively easily by those who were perceived as having special value for the host country, international celebrities like Sigmund Freud, performing artists like Richard Tauber, academics and scientists brought over by the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, or entrepreneurs willing to create new industrial enterprises and jobs; these were few in number, but influential in shaping the values, culture and self-image of the refugee community, especially as one can add to them famous people like the writer Stefan Zweig, who had been admitted to Britain already before the Anschluss.

Those who could show that they would not become a financial burden on the British state were another, and rather larger, group who were also granted visas more readily. These included those who found British citizens willing to provide a financial guarantee for them, and those who could finance themselves, the latter being few indeed, given the near-impossibility of bringing material assets out of the Reich. But quite a number of Austrians were able to avail themselves of private or business contacts with British citizens or firms to secure a guarantee. See for example the interview with Helga Reutter, carried out for the book *Changing Countries*, which relates how her non-Jewish husband was able to secure an invitation to come and work in Britain, or the interview

[6] The mass exodus of Austrian Jews to Britain was presumably a major factor contributing to the relatively high percentage of Austrian Jews who survived the Holocaust, some two thirds, as opposed to little more than half of the Jews from Germany.

with Wilhelmine (Mimi) Glover, for the same book, in which she records how her cousin, Arthur Grenville (Artur Grünfeld), the father of the present writer, had been able to use his business association with the Dunhill company to secure admission to Britain for himself and for several family members trapped in Austria.[8]

Obviously, it was the more affluent, middle-class sections of Austrian Jewry who were more likely to be able to take advantage of such contacts, while poorer Jews tended to lack the life-saving benefits of wealth, contacts abroad, bankable qualifications and easy access to foreign travel. Although the British authorities issued regulations to passport officers[9] intended to keep out small businessmen, agents, shopkeepers and those in similar occupations, they were less than successful in doing so. Indeed, one of the features of the German- and Austrian-Jewish refugee community in Britain was precisely the number of small businessmen and traders it contained, as a walk in the post-war years up the Finchley Road in North-West London, the area around which the refugees clustered most densely, would have demonstrated. Much the same applies to what the British government's circular to its consulates referred to as 'minor musicians', which is precisely what many of those who later helped to transform the musical scene in Britain were in 1938/39. Two further groups whose entry was resisted not only on paper by the British government, but also more robustly by British professional associations defending the interests of their members were lawyers and medical and dental practitioners; despite the barriers they faced, however, they arrived in some numbers, presumably reflecting, as did the businessmen, the patterns of employment and vocational choice common among middle-class Austrian Jews. Considerable numbers of medical practitioners from Austria eventually practised in Britain; fewer lawyers were able to practise, on account of the two countries' differing legal systems, but their skills still enabled many of them to build careers in commerce, industry, management or general administration.

A large group of women came to Britain on domestic service visas, to meet a perceived shortage of domestic servants in British households. A smaller number also

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[7] See the interview with Hanne Norbert-Miller in the Oral History Collection of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, held at the Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London.
[8] See the interviews with Helga Reutter and Mimi Glover in the Oral History Collection of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies.

came to work as nurses; some of these subsequently went on to become doctors, showing the initiative and drive often associated with the refugees, though others, one should not forget, saw their career aspirations shattered for life. Many of the domestic servants endured poor treatment and harsh conditions, though fortunately most were soon able to escape into better forms of employment once war broke out and their labour was in demand elsewhere. It seems that those who worked in the households of British Jews often carried a lasting sense of grievance, perhaps because they expected better from co-religionists; this is evident, for example, from the interviews conducted with Bina Wallach and Polly Zinram by the present writer.[10] At any rate, the treatment of domestics by Anglo-Jewish families does seem to be one of the factors contributing to the abiding distance between the Jews from Central Europe and established Anglo-Jewry, a factor of very great importance for the entire character and development of the German- and Austrian-Jewish refugee communities in Britain, which were not, as expected, smoothly absorbed into Anglo-Jewry.[11]

The British authorities were also prepared to admit on a temporary basis 'transmigrants' who could be expected to emigrate on from Britain to another country; several thousand men came to Britain as transmigrants, of whom at least 3,500 were accommodated at Kitchener Camp, at Richborough in Kent. Well over a third of the camp inmates were Austrians. The admission of transmigrants was also used as a device to save the lives of Jewish men who had been sent to concentration camps after Kristallnacht and whom the German authorities would only agree to release if they had the necessary documents for emigration to a foreign country. In practice, the 'temporary' admission of transmigrants proved to be something of a fiction, as they were never obliged to move on and following the outbreak of war were allowed to stay permanently in the same way as other refugees. Also permitted to stay were those already living

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[9] The Passport Control Department of the Foreign Office issued a circular to Consuls and Passport Control Officers on 27 April 1938 containing instructions on the categories of people who should and should not be granted visas. See Sherman, *Island Refuge*, pp. 90f.

[10] See the interviews conducted by Anthony Grenville with Bina Wallach, 18 December 2000, and with Polly Zinram, 21 January 2001, in the possession of the author.

[11] See Anthony Grenville, 'The Integration of Aliens: The Early Years of the *Association of Jewish Refugees Information, 1946-50*', in *German-speaking Exiles in Great Britain: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 1 (1999), pp. 10f. and 17ff. See also Anthony Grenville, 'Relations between the Jewish Refugees from Hitler and Anglo-Jewry', unpublished lecture delivered at the Wiener Library, London, 3 April 2001.

temporarily in Britain, like the future Nobel Prize winning chemist Max Perutz, who had come to Britain from Vienna for research purposes in 1936 and for whom return became impossible after the Anschluss.

The Austrian Jews who fled to Britain in 1938/39 were not representative of Austrian Jewry as a whole; this again is of the greatest importance for the development of the Austrian refugee community in Britain, for that community would have been very different if it had reflected more exactly the social and occupational structure of Austrian Jewry. Like Austrian Jewry, the refugees were overwhelmingly Viennese. Austrian Jews in Britain who originate from towns and cities outside Vienna are notable for their rarity: I have interviewed only one, an observant Jew from the village of Lackenbach in the Burgenland, one of a group of Jewish settlements long established on Esterhazy land. Emigration was easier from Vienna, given the proximity of foreign consulates and also the Nazi offices from which permission and documentation had to be secured. As well as being less cosmopolitan in outlook, less wealthy and less well provided with foreign contacts than Jews from the capital, Jews living in the provinces were also more isolated and more at the mercy of the hostility of any official who chose to obstruct their efforts to leave.

That the emigration from Vienna was unrepresentative of Viennese Jewry as a whole and drew disproportionately on middle-class groups is easily demonstrated. The largest concentration by far of Jews in any district of Vienna was to be found in the Leopoldstadt, the Second District, where the Jewish population tended to be poorer, working-class, Orthodox and closer to the traditions and customs of the shtetls and ghettos of the East; the same was true to some extent of the Twentieth District, Brigittenau, which contained a sizeable Jewish population. But the refugees in Britain tended to come far more heavily from the more prosperous inner districts of Vienna, where the Jews were assimilated, secularized, bourgeois in their lifestyle, well educated and wedded to the German-speaking culture of the city to which they had contributed so notably.

It is a common perception that one only has to scratch a Viennese Jew to discover a Freud, a Schnitzler, a Popper or at the very least a budding member of the Amadeus Quartet. This is, however, a false perception, resulting not least from the fact that the

non-assimilated, working-class Jews from the poorer districts of Vienna, though more numerous, were far less successful than assimilated, middle-class, ‘culture-bearing’ Jews in overcoming the daunting obstacles to emigration in the short period between the Anschluss and the outbreak of war. In the lapidary phrase of Georg Stefan Troller, describing in his autobiographical volume *Selbstbeschreibung* the former ghetto of the Leopoldstadt and the fate of its Orthodox residents, ‘Waren wir Assimilanten nach Westen emigriert, so die frommen Chassidim geschlossen nach Auschwitz’.[12]

To take an example: of the nine Jews interviewed for the book *Changing Countries* who grew up in Vienna, only one came from a working-class area; though the interviewees for the book cannot be seen as a representative sample, this is nevertheless a striking figure. Even those refugees from Vienna whose families - those of Mimi Glover and Bina Wallach for example - lived in modest circumstances were often more middle-class than proletarian in their values, lifestyle and aspirations, and their fathers were not manual workers. I have interviewed very few Viennese refugees whose fathers were unmistakably manual workers; one is Otto Deutsch, who grew up in a municipal housing block in the working-class Tenth District, Favoriten, the classic background for the proletariat of ‘Red Vienna’. Otto Deutsch’s relatives still mostly lived as Orthodox Jews in the Leopoldstadt, and he remained drawn to the working-class and traditionally Jewish ambience with which he was familiar long after emigrating to Britain – though he subsequently settled in Southend-on-Sea, made a career as a tour manager and guide, and is now chairman of the Essex branch of the Association of Jewish Refugees.[13] Many of the political refugees, who identified strongly with the proletarian left, did not settle in Britain after 1945, thus further weakening the working-class element in the Austrian emigration; most of them were in any case both Jewish and middle-class, despite their adoption of names like Franz West (Franz Carl Weintraub), President of the Austrian Centre, or Fritz Walter (Otto Brichacek), Chairman of Young Austria.

[12] Quoted in Georg Stefan Troller, ‘Eine Art Venedig ohne Lagune’ in *Ein Niemandsland, aber welch ein Rundblick!: Exilautoren über Nachkriegswien*, ed. by Ursula Seeber (Vienna: Picus, 1998), pp. 87-90 (p. 87).

[13] See the filmed interview with Otto Deutsch conducted by Anthony Grenville as part of the project ‘Refugee Voices: The Association of Jewish Refugees Audio-Visual History Collection’, to be held at the Jewish Museum, London.

The Second World War greatly disrupted the process of the settlement and the partial integration of the refugees from Austria into British society, notably through the restrictions imposed on 'enemy aliens' at the start of the war, the internment of many thousands of refugees in May/June 1940, the dislocation caused by the bombing of British cities, and the geographical dispersion of the many refugees who served in the British forces, often overseas, or contributed to the war effort in other ways. From a scholar's point of view, the war had the advantage of separating out the Austrian from the German component of the refugee community in Britain, since the wartime period brought about a flowering of specifically Austrian organizations dedicated to the establishment of an Austrian presence in Britain. This has enabled scholars to research the wartime period very fully.

Indeed, one of the reasons why the wartime period will largely be passed over here is that one can find an excellent brief overview of it in Reinhard Müller's account, 'Das Austrian Centre und sein Umfeld. Eine kleine Chronik. Großbritannien 1938-1945', also in the series *Österreichische Literatur im Exil* and on the same website, literaturepochen.at/exil. The Austrian Centre, which was at the heart of Austrian activities in Britain during the war, was the largest and most important of the organizations set up by Austrian refugees in Britain, and it has naturally attracted the most attention, for it was by any standards a remarkable achievement. It is the subject of a major study by Marietta Bearman, Charmian Brinson, Richard Dove, Anthony Grenville and Jennifer Taylor, to be published towards the end of 2003 by the Czernin Verlag, Vienna, and entitled *Wien – London hin und retour*. Wolfgang Muchitsch has produced two valuable volumes documenting the Austrian exiles, *Österreicher im Exil* (already mentioned) and *Mit Spaten, Waffen und Worten. Die Einbindung österreichischer Flüchtlinge in die britischen Kriegsanstrengungen 1939-1945* (Vienna, 1992). The politics and the political organizations created in exile are very fully covered in Helene Maimann's *Politik im Wartesaal. Österreichische Exilpolitik in Großbritannien 1938-1945* (Vienna, 1975).

One point relating to the impact of the war on relations between the refugees and their British hosts does, however, merit closer consideration. The war greatly disrupted the refugees' lives, as already mentioned, and the refugees often had in these early years to endure the ugly underside of prejudice, intolerance and deep-seated British suspicion

of foreigners, especially Jews - and German-speaking Jews at that. But from a psychological point of view, it appears that overall the war years contributed significantly to the readiness of the refugees to integrate into British society and to build their future lives in their country of refuge. The Austrian refugees had come from a country that had been gravely weakened by seemingly insuperable internal conflicts, amounting almost to a suppressed civil war after the events of February and July 1934. Over this sorry situation had presided the Schuschnigg government, combining homegrown authoritarianism with an increasing loss of autonomy to its German neighbour that culminated in the ignominious collapse of March 1938.

By contrast, the Nazi regime, for all its brutality, gave the impression of dynamism, of an unstoppable momentum towards further expansion and conquest by a movement to which tomorrow did indeed belong. This impression was reinforced by the stunning successes achieved first by Hitler's diplomacy, over the Sudetenland, the bloodless occupation of the rump of the Czech lands, and the pact with Stalin, then by the seemingly unending series of military successes in both Poland and the West by the strategy of the so-called 'Blitzkrieg'. Only with the appointment of Winston Churchill to the position of British Prime Minister and the subsequent victory in the Battle of Britain did Hitler suffer his first and, as later became clear, decisive setback. Never again could the Führer enjoy the psychological supremacy that his words and actions had won him before the summer of 1940; the rhetoric of conquest and destruction – 'Wir werden ihre Städte ausradieren' – sounded like crude bombast alongside the inspirational invocation of collective resistance to the Nazi aggressor – 'We shall fight them on the beaches'.

The experience of British society in wartime, the behaviour of ordinary British men and women during the Blitz, during the long years of privation, danger, losses and hardship, left a deep impression on many refugees. They saw in the quiet determination to win through to victory at all costs and in the refusal to contemplate defeat a unity of purpose lacking in pre-war Austria, a unity that transcended political divisions in the battle against the common foe and that bound the nation willingly into the war effort that would ensure its survival, while still preserving a measure of consideration for others, of fair-mindedness, civilized manners and, not least, humour. This was a cause in which the refugees, the erstwhile outcasts and victims, could once again share as equals, to which

they could contribute actively and in which they could take pride, however modest their sphere of action.

Though it is hard to measure, the psychological impact of the wartime years on the refugees' view of Britain is hard to overestimate, and it goes a long way towards explaining the extremely – one might say unexpectedly, even undeservedly – favourable image of Britain common among the refugees. This view of Britain, related to the general mythologization of the war in post-war British society, was strengthened by the revelations of Nazi crimes and the extermination of Austria's Jews that emerged at the war's end and that for many refugees ended their sense of identification with their former homeland. The refugees often had reason to shake their heads at the behaviour of the British, but increasingly they did so with reluctant admiration and a slightly baffled, but deeply felt and enduring affection. This is not to minimize the hardships and perhaps especially the isolation and emotional insecurity that beset so many refugees. One only needs to think of the children and young people who came over on Kindertransports and had to fend for themselves, in orphanages and foster families, often in menial positions and with little or no support. On the other hand, a surprising number of these did succeed in making careers for themselves in middle-class professions: for example, Richard Grunberger, editor of the *Association of Jewish Refugees Journal* since 1988, and Ernst Flesch, secretary of Club 1943 and a former college lecturer, came over as boys on Kindertransports and spent their early years in Britain in very unpropitious circumstances.

Almost all the specifically Austrian organizations set up during the war ceased to exist once it had ended, including the Austrian Centre, the Free Austrian Movement, Young Austria, the newspaper *Zeitspiegel*, the Austria Office and many others, since their leading spirits mostly returned to Austria; such specifically Austrian institutions as the units in the British armed forces manned by Austrians also ceased to exist, while the BBC's Austrian Section was eventually wound up. Those that remained were often devoted to particular purposes, like the Anglo-Austrian Music Society; the Anglo-Austrian Society (originally Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society) never succeeded in gaining the organisational allegiance of the broad mass of the refugee community. It is at this point that the difficulties inherent in the task of tracing the specifically Austrian

element in the development of the by now very largely Jewish community of refugees from the German-speaking lands in Britain become plain. Unfortunately, almost no scholarly work has been done on the refugees from Austria in Britain after 1945 as a distinct group; Marion Berghahn's *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 1988), the fullest published investigation of its subject in terms of the number of refugees surveyed, makes plain in its title that it excludes refugees from Austria.

In the post-war years of settlement and gradual integration, the Jewish refugees from Austria had much more in common with their fellow refugees from Germany than with any other group, and these common elements of language, culture, heritage, everyday habits of life, religious observance (or the lack of it), as well as their common fate as victims of Nazi persecution, drew the two groups together powerfully. Already before the war, Austrian refugees had come under the umbrella of organizations set up to deal with their German counterparts: Jewish refugees from Vienna were granted assistance by the Jewish Refugees Committee and looked, as did the German Jews, to the organizations based in Woburn House and Bloomsbury House, while the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning extended to Austrian scholars and scientists its programme for bringing over to Britain refugee academics from German universities. The earliest organizations set up by the refugees themselves, the Self-Aid of Refugees (1938) and the Association of Jewish Refugees, founded in June 1941 and the most important and long-lived of all, likewise conceived of themselves as representing the interests of all refugees from the German-speaking lands (all Jewish refugees, broadly defined, in the case of the AJR).

Arguably, the key factor here is the self-image of the refugees from Austria, which can be said to be central to the development of their collective identity and to the evolution of their community. One can argue that the refugees from Austria who opted to stay in Britain after 1945, almost all as British citizens, made a deliberate choice that reflected a significant change in their sense of their own identity and in the community to which they owed allegiance. Tellingly, the great majority of them did not opt for either of the clearly Jewish alternatives open to them, emigration to Palestine, shortly to become the Jewish state of Israel, or absorption into Anglo-Jewry, a community primarily defined

by its adherence to Jewish customs and values. Equally fundamental was their abandonment of their identity as Austrians, which had been largely forced on them by their treatment in post-Anschluss Austria and by the destruction of the entire Jewish community in Austria and the consequent disappearance of a great part of the emotional and cultural environment in which they had grown up.

A return to Austria was for many a journey to a familiar landscape now inhabited only by the ghosts of the past, as can be seen from the testimonies collected by Ursula Seeber in the volume *Ein Niemandsland, aber welch ein Rundblick! Exilautoren über Nachkriegswien*. It soon became common knowledge among refugees that the welcome extended by Austrians to returning Jews was less than effusive and that the anti-Semitism that had flourished especially under the Nazis still lurked behind the Austrians' perception of themselves as victims (backed by the wording of the Moscow Declaration of 1943 on Austrian independence, which called Austria the first victim of Nazi aggression). It was particularly galling for victims of Nazi persecution to be greeted on return visits with descriptions of the sufferings undergone by Austrians which the refugees had had the good fortune to escape; replying to one such self-pitying friend, a visiting refugee found the telling retort: 'Aber Du hast doch wenigstens noch Deine Familie'.[14] Arguably, most Jews from Austria no longer felt themselves properly to be Austrians after 1945, given that in the post-war years the Austrian state made little attempt to reintegrate them as Austrian citizens or to heal the wounds inflicted on them and their families in the Nazi years. They felt in effect that their expulsion from Austrian society had not been made good after 1945.

However, many refugees felt an abiding attachment to Vienna, the city of their birth, to its culture, its beauty, its easy charm and easy-going way of life, to the romance of its spirit compared to the mundane greyness of daily life in London. (Can one imagine *The Third Man* being filmed in Battersea or Kentish Town?) The refugees were unwilling to be Austrians and unable to be English (as opposed to British by nationality), but continued to think of themselves as Viennese in terms of their personal identity. Viennese culture was a key point here, both in the sense that the refugees continued to practise it in

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[14] Verbal account of an encounter in post-war Vienna by Trude Grenville, née Strassberg, mother of the present writer.

their reading, their appreciation of art and especially their love of music, and in the pride that they took in the massive contribution that Viennese Jews, a tiny group in a population of over fifty million, made to British culture. Their contribution in the musical field is so well-known that it needs no further recapitulation here, and the same applies in publishing, art history and psychiatry and psychology, among the many other fields of art, science, culture, education and enterprise documented most recently by Daniel Snowman in *The Hitler Émigrés: The Cultural Impact on Britain of Refugees from Nazism* (London, 2002).

In an interview conducted for the film accompanying the exhibition 'Continental Britons', Norbert Brainin of the Amadeus Quartet defined his identity as Viennese, not because he lived in Vienna or had any formal association with it, but because the spirit of his music was Viennese, and that, he said, putting his hand to his heart, he carried within him.[15] The spell of Vienna – 'Es gibt nur a Kaiserstadt, es gibt nur a Wien' – remained unbroken, as is evident from the loving nostalgia with which many refugees speak in interviews of the city of their childhood and youth. A romantic might say that if the spirit of Viennese Jewry survived anywhere, it survived in the post-war decades in the refugee heartlands of North-West London. In those years, the unmistakable flavour and style of Viennese life could be heard along the Finchley Road, West End Lane and Haverstock Hill in North-West London: in the Blue Danube Club, where Peter Herz produced witty reviews in a Central European style with titles like *The Importance of Being Funny* and *Gentlemen Prefer Money*; in the Cosmo Restaurant, whose owners for many years were the Mannheimer family from Vienna, and in other cafés, restaurants, food shops and delicatessen; or in Libris bookshop, run by the Viennese bibliophile Dr Joseph Suschitzky.

It is true that even in the early years organizations were created specifically to meet the needs of the refugees from Austria. There was the Jacob Ehrlich Society, founded in December 1941 to represent Austrian Jews and in particular to press for full

[15] Interview with Norbert Brainin conducted by Bea Lewkowicz, to be held at the Jewish Museum, London, as part of the 'Refugee Voices' collection. The exhibition 'Continental Britons: Jewish Refugees from Nazi Europe', which was shown at the Jewish Museum in London May - November 2002, was created by Anthony Grenville, Bea Lewkowicz and Carol Seigel, to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Association of Jewish Refugees. The exhibition catalogue is by Anthony Grenville and the film by Bea Lewkowicz.

compensation for the material, emotional and psychological losses that they had suffered. The Jacob Ehrlich Society, however, was soon absorbed into the Association of Jewish Refugees; indeed, its founder, Rudolf Bienenfeld, a lawyer and writer of exceptional abilities, was also the sole Austrian on the founding Executive of the AJR. Other Austrians prominent in the early years of the AJR were Carl (Charles) Kapralik, another expert on restitution matters, and F.L. Brassloff.

Restitution was one of the very few areas where there was a clear separation between refugee Austrians and Germans, as they addressed their claims to different successor states on the territory of the former Reich. Even here, the Council of Jews from Austria, which concerned itself with restitution, was closely modeled on its German sister organization, the Council of Jews from Germany, created towards the end of the war as a common endeavour by the organizations of the Jewish refugees in Britain, the USA and Palestine. Otherwise, the Jewish refugees from Austria set up no general representative organizations of their own after the war; an organization for ex-Berliners in Britain was set up, and one for ex-Breslauers, but none for ex-Viennese, though Jews from Vienna living in Britain almost certainly outnumber those from any other German-speaking city.

In general, then, the social development of the community of Jewish refugees from Austria closely parallels that of the refugees from Germany. Both groups settled in large numbers in North-West London, though there was substantial settlement in other cities, especially Manchester and Glasgow, and in other parts of London, especially Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington, where the more Orthodox congregated, and also in South-West London, where the existence in past years of an Austrian Centre branch in Richmond and an AJR Old Age Home, Otto Hirsch House, in Kew may perhaps modify Hilde Spiel's vision of Wimbledon as a cultural wilderness remote from the centres of refugee settlement.[16]

Many refugees, though by no means all, appear to have followed the pattern of resuming in Britain the process of assimilation that had been underway for some generations in Austria and Germany, after its brutal interruption in those countries by the onset of Nazism. The severing of the ties with the countries of birth probably accelerated

the process of assimilation, as the mass adoption of British names in the post-war years testifies. The Jews of Vienna had long been noted for their assimilationist tendencies, probably because the Jewish community in Vienna was itself so new, having come into being only in the mid-nineteenth century, when Jews were finally permitted to reside in the imperial capital; many more German Jews could trace their ancestors back for generations in the same town or area - even in Berlin the Jewish community was solidly established far earlier than in Vienna. The extraordinarily rapid growth of Vienna's Jewish community in the period between 1867 and 1914 and the accompanying secularisation, economic and commercial advancement, ascent into the middle classes, along with a cultural and intellectual flowering of Europe-wide importance, reflected the restless dynamism of a community much of which had thrown off its traditional beliefs and practices and, no longer rooted in the past, had opted headlong for assimilation into the modern, bourgeois world.

One might suggest that the Jews from Vienna were in the vanguard also when it came to integrating into British society and making their lives here afresh. Jews from Austria were at least as eager as those from Germany to assert their right to choose their new homeland. They resisted any attempt to repatriate them to their native lands after the war, they took British nationality in the process of naturalization that saw most refugees becoming British citizens by 1950, many took British names, and few returned to Austria. Unfortunately, there are no precise figures on which to establish a comparison between German and Austrian Jews in these respects. But I would speculate, from my own experience of refugees from Austria, that former Viennese Jews were rather more inclined than their German counterparts to abandon their ties with their former environment. I am thinking especially of the large numbers of them who did not join a synagogue or any other of the communal institutions so prominent in Jewish life – with the notable exception of the AJR, an organization that is studiously neutral in religious matters, but devoted to preserving the cultural heritage of Central Europe.[17]

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[16] Hilde Spiel's sense of isolation in Wimbledon is a recurrent theme in her volumes of memoirs *Die hellen und die finsteren Zeiten: Erinnerungen 1911-1946* (Munich: List, 1989) and *Welche Welt ist meine Welt? Erinnerungen 1946-1989* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992).

[17] The total abandonment of Judaism and Jewish practices was widespread among Viennese Jews in Britain, but this was by no means true of all of them. One need only mention the name of Rabbi Dr Ignaz Maybaum of Edgware Reform Synagogue in whom, in Albert H. Friedlander's words, 'the congregation

This has been a brief attempt at a collective portrait of the Austrian refugees who settled in Britain, though there are many to whom it does not apply in one or more particulars. Mainly Jewish and preponderantly from Vienna, the refugees tended already to be middle-class, well educated and non-observant before emigration, a pattern that continued in Britain and that separated them from British Jews, who maintained traditional customs and were, at least on arrival, poor and lower-class. The difference in the areas of initial settlement, the East End of London in the case of the Jews from Tsarist Russia and the North-Western inner suburbs in that of the Jews fleeing Hitler, underlines the point. The occupational and professional structure of the community also bears this out, with a considerable number engaged in business, trade and commerce, in the legal and medical professions, in education and the arts, science, media and culture, and with a markedly lower proportion in manual, unskilled and semi-skilled jobs than was the case for the population as a whole. The contribution of Austrian Jews to music in Britain deserves special mention, as does that to publishing – though the latter was of little help to the exiled writers from Austria, most of whom returned to countries where German, the language in which they wrote most naturally, was spoken.

The refugees from Austria held firmly to their culture, proud of that part of the heritage that they had brought with them to enrich their adopted homeland. A distinctly Viennese brand of culture was discernible, from audiences at the Wigmore Hall to consumers of the products of firms like O.P. Chocolate Specialities (Manufacturers) Ltd., which styled itself 'Makers of the Original "Viennese Dessert"', of '"Pischinger Torten" to the original recipe', '"Mozart bon-bons" and Viennese wafer biscuit specialities', and hailed from Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan. But their adherence to Viennese culture was not matched by a continuing sense of Austrian identity. In the absence of this and also of any deep commitment to specifically Jewish practices and beliefs and a desire to integrate into Anglo-Jewry, the refugees chose instead to build their new lives within the broad framework of British society. This extended beyond the formal acquisition of British nationality, though it did not go so far as to enable them to feel fully English. On the whole, their recorded testimony and memoirs show that they experienced relatively little

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heard the authentic voice of the German Jew who had come out of the concentration camp, but had not lost his faith in God'.

hostility or open anti-Semitism, though most, especially those who arrived as adults, remained aware of an unspoken divide between themselves and the native British.

The question of the relations between the refugees and the British is a huge and under-researched field, and it has only been possible here to sketch out some of the factors that led to the conditional willingness of the refugees to adapt to and integrate into British society and to their general feeling that the British were on the whole reasonably well disposed towards them. Some scholars would dissent from these judgments, but, significantly, the proportion of such dissenters is far higher among anti-Establishment academics than among the former refugees themselves. Though the exiled writers faced special problems, on account of the difficulty of adapting to a public with a different language and indeed a different social culture, their life in Britain after the war would broadly have been subject to the conditions set out here.