

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: ANYWHERE BUT THE REICH: THE JEWS OF NAZI VIENNA'S APPLICATIONS FOR EMIGRATION AID, 1938-1940

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After Nazi Germany annexed Austria in the *Anschluss* in 1938, an immediate outpouring of antisemitic violence and legislation horrified the Jews of Vienna. Between 1938 and 1940, Viennese Jews applied to the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien* (Jewish Community of Vienna or IKG) for financial aid to emigrate. Through a close examination of emigration questionnaires Viennese Jews submitted to the IKG, I demonstrate the harrowing effect of the *Anschluss* and *Kristallnacht* (November 1938 pogrom) on Jews from all social classes. By centering how individual families engaged with the emigration process, I argue that Viennese Jews immediately recognized the need to flee and exercised enormous creativity to escape. Desperate Viennese Jews were willing to emigrate anywhere and obtain any job outside the Reich. Viennese Jews also demonstrated resilience in the face of Nazi terror by applying for financial aid to flee the Reich even as potential havens shut their doors to Jewish refugees.

ANYWHERE BUT THE REICH: THE JEWS OF NAZI VIENNA'S  
APPLICATIONS FOR EMIGRATION AID, 1938-1940

by

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As I write, the University of Maryland and the global community are in lockdown, battling the COVID-19 pandemic. With gratitude to the network acknowledged above for transitioning to virtual communication, I completed the final stages of this thesis remotely. May we emerge soon from this catastrophe.

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## Introduction: Violence in Vienna

After Nazi Germany annexed Austria in the *Anschluss* in 1938, an immediate outpouring of antisemitic violence and legislation horrified the Jews of Vienna. In response, Viennese Jews exercised enormous creativity to flee the Third Reich. Desperate Viennese Jews were willing to go anywhere and take on any job overseas so long as they could escape the Nazi regime. In addition to applying for visas to the United States, members of the Viennese Jewish community were willing to immigrate to places as distant as Shanghai and Latin America and obtain agricultural training to settle in Mandatory Palestine. Viennese Jews also demonstrated resilience in the face of Nazi terror by applying for financial aid to flee the Reich even as potential havens shut their doors to Jewish refugees. In addition, unlike the German Jews, most Austrian Jews, who lived primarily in Vienna, immediately recognized the necessity of fleeing the Reich after the arrival of the Nazi regime.

On the day of the *Anschluss*, March 12, 1938, Austria had a population of 185,028 Jews, 90% of whom—169,978 individuals—lived in Vienna.<sup>1</sup> After the Third Reich annexed Austria, the regime brutalized Vienna's Jewish community, expropriated its wealth, and destroyed its homes and livelihoods. Between the *Anschluss* in March 1938 and the Nazis' October 1941 decision to bar any further emigration out of the Reich, the Jewish population of Vienna shrank to 44,000 people

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung: Die Juden in Österreich, 1938-1945* (Vienna: Herold Druck, 1978), 13. Rosenkranz cited an IKG report on emigration from May 2, 1938 through June 30, 1941 for the Jewish population of Vienna (Rosenkranz, 311 n3).

as approximately 75% of its pre-*Anschluss* population fled.<sup>2</sup> The *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien* (Jewish Community of Vienna, or IKG) received funds from American Jewish philanthropic organizations and distributed aid to almost every one of those 75%. The Nazi administration forced the IKG to stop processing formal requests for financial aid in August 1940. Nevertheless, the IKG was able to distribute these funds through 1941. The Gestapo formally shut down the IKG in 1942.<sup>3</sup> While the official German policy was to remove Jews from the Reich and make it *judenrein* (ethnically cleansed of Jews), the IKG saw its mission as rescuing Jews from anti-Jewish violence in Vienna. In that mission, it was very successful.

Popular antisemitic violence erupted in Vienna in anticipation of the annexation, and it continued unabated<sup>4</sup> and at the behest of the state. On the day before the *Anschluss*, tens of thousands of gentile Viennese rampaged through the Leopoldstadt—a largely Jewish neighborhood in Vienna—chanting “Down with the Jews! Heil Hitler!”<sup>5</sup> After the *Anschluss*, the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, a paramilitary force associated with the Nazi party) and SS (*Schutzstaffel*, the Nazi paramilitary security, surveillance, and terror agency which controlled the German police forces and concentration camp system) began a daily routine of forcing Jews from their homes,

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<sup>2</sup> Ilana Fritz Offenberger, *The Jews of Nazi Vienna: Rescue and Destruction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 197. According to Offenberger, the Jewish population of Vienna was 181,778 in March 1938. Offenberger cited an IKG report on its activities from May 2, 1938 through December 31, 1939 for the 181,778 figure (Offenberger, 209, n103). The IKG reports Rosenkranz and Offenberger cited may have varied based on their intended audiences: before July 1941, the reports were submitted to foreign Jewish organizations but after 1941 the reports were written for Nazi authorities and internal IKG operations (Offenberger, 266).

<sup>3</sup> Offenberger, 264.

<sup>4</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1997), 241.

<sup>5</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler's Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 133.

and forcing them to clean the Nazis' toilets and stolen vehicles.<sup>6</sup> From the *Anschluss* through *Kristallnacht* and beyond, ordinary Viennese, led and encouraged by the SA, attacked and humiliated rich and poor Jews alike. Antisemitic mobs stole Torah scrolls from synagogues, sheared rabbis' beards with rusty scissors, forced Jewish leaders to scrub toilet bowls with prayer shawls, and stole furs, furniture, and other items of value to Jews.<sup>7</sup> Nazis forced Jews to clean apartments expropriated from other Jews, or simply taken after its Jewish residents committed suicide.<sup>8</sup> While the Nazi expropriation of Jewish wealth began with outright looting, the fact that the mobs and the state equally targeted Jewish holy sites and Jewish persons for daily humiliation demonstrates a hatred stronger than simply greed.

Viennese Jews understood immediately when the Nazis came to power in Austria in March 1938 that they should flee. In contrast, German Jews did not generally flee Germany as soon as the Nazis came to power in 1933.<sup>9</sup> In fact, in many ways the Viennese and German Jews differed. In Vienna, women and men were equally alert to the danger whereas in Germany, women were alert to the danger earlier than men.<sup>10</sup> In addition, a higher percentage of Viennese Jews fled. While 75% of Viennese Jews left the Reich between 1938 and 1941, albeit not necessarily to safety, about 60% of German Jewry (between 270,000 and 300,000 people out of

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<sup>6</sup> Doron Rabinovici, *Eichmann's Jews: The Jewish Administration of Holocaust Vienna, 1938-1945*, translated by Nick Somers (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 33.

<sup>7</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 134.

<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Botz, *Wien vom "Anschluss" zum Krieg: Nationalsozialistische Machtübernahme und politisch-soziale Umgestaltung am Beispiel der Stadt Wien 1938/39* (Vienna: Jugend und Volk: 1978), 94-95.

<sup>9</sup> Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62-73.

<sup>10</sup> Kaplan, 62-67.



525,000 Jews registered in Germany in 1933) emigrated under the Nazi regime.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, many Viennese Jews fled quickly, perhaps because unlike German Jews, most Austrian Jews were located in one city and the IKG could act as a central clearinghouse for emigration. In addition, in Germany as in Austria many Jews loved their country and initially did not want to leave – but until *Kristallnacht* in November 1938 German Jews hoped they could remain in Germany.<sup>12</sup> *Kristallnacht* shattered that hope throughout the Reich.<sup>13</sup> By that time, however, many Viennese Jews had already responded to the arrival of the Nazi regime in Austria by attempting to emigrate.

Amidst the ongoing waves of antisemitic violence and humiliation, suddenly impoverished Jews turned to the IKG for financial assistance to flee. It was natural for Viennese Jews to turn to the organized Jewish community of the city, the IKG. The IKG was founded in 1852 to administer Jewish religious, educational, and philanthropic affairs in Vienna. Until 1938, the IKG provided for Jewish religious needs, including the supervision of kosher slaughter and matzah for Passover, and maintained synagogues, ritual baths, and cemeteries.<sup>14</sup> It also oversaw Jewish social welfare institutions such as hospitals, soup kitchens, orphanages, Jewish religious instruction, and eldercare facilities.<sup>15</sup> After the *Anschluss*, the Nazi administration

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<sup>11</sup> Kaplan, 20, 231. These numbers are imprecise because the last German census before the Nazi regime came to power in 1933 was in 1925. The census counted Jews by religion while the Nazis counted Jews according to pseudoscientific racist standards.

<sup>12</sup> Kaplan, 231.

<sup>13</sup> Kaplan, 231-232.

<sup>14</sup> Marsha Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna: 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1983), 148.

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Vienna Jewish Community, A/W 126, Reel 294, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

deliberately made life so unpleasant for Viennese Jews that they would have no choice but to flee, and one of the Nazi initiatives was to disband the IKG in March 1938. Between 1938 and 1942, the IKG only administered Jewish emigration and financial aid, its previous functions not reestablished until after the World War II. In 1938, SS-*Obersturmbahnführer* Adolf Eichmann, the head of the Jewish desk of the Gestapo and one of the chief organizers of Jewish mass emigration, only reopened the offices to focus solely on facilitating Jewish emigration.<sup>16</sup> The restored IKG included an emigration department designed to prepare Jews for emigration and review emigration questionnaires.<sup>17</sup>

To begin this process, Viennese Jews contacted the IKG and heads of Jewish households completed emigration questionnaires. These questionnaires, designed to demonstrate each household's monetary needs, reveal precisely how the Nazi regime dismantled the structure of Jewish daily life in Vienna, and tell the story of an imperiled community's desperate attempts to flee. The emigration questionnaires included twelve sections including free-text narrative portions, plus attached documents such as ship's passage and letters of support. The forms also requested demographic information as well as information specifically about emigration plans.<sup>18</sup> For instance, the form included a section in which applicants listed possible destinations where they would settle. In this section, Jewish applicants to the IKG specified their intentions to immigrate either to specific countries, or frequently, anywhere outside the Reich. Between 1938 and 1940, 6% of applicants stated they

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<sup>16</sup> Offenberger, xi.

<sup>17</sup> Rabinovici, 43.

<sup>18</sup> Offenberger, 82.

would travel anywhere and 20% specifically noted the United States as their intended destination. Another 18% specified European countries especially England, 15% specified former English colonies, and 11% specified Palestine, 14% specified Latin America, and 9% specified Asia. Most applicants listed multiple possible destinations, while others simply left that section of their applications blank.<sup>19</sup> Their responses to these narrative portions, as well as those sections left blank, paint a picture of how Viennese Jews from across the socio-economic spectrum sought to flee. These open-ended sections of the questionnaires indicate the applicants' desperation and resourcefulness.

Drawing from the archival records of the IKG, including both the emigration questionnaires and the IKG's financial reports from the years 1938-1940, this thesis argues that Viennese Jews of all social classes responded to Nazi policies and especially the violence of the *Anschluss* and of *Kristallnacht* by attempting to emigrate. Although none of the IKG questionnaires confirm whether the applicants reached a safe harbor, Viennese Jews' answers on the questionnaires do provide insights into the demographic makeup of the Jewish community of Vienna, its creativity and tenacity in seeking means of escape, and in some cases, how Jews paid for ship's passage out of Europe. These two-page emigration questionnaires were the first step in the Viennese registration process for emigration.<sup>20</sup> The IKG produced two sets of such emigration questionnaires, both now housed on microfilm at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum; one set, the Archive of the Jewish Community of

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<sup>19</sup> Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>20</sup> Offenberger, 82. Offenberger incorrectly claims this questionnaire was four pages, although in some instances a two-page application was attached to the questionnaire.

Vienna – Vienna component collection, contains numerically arranged questionnaires; the second set, called the Jerusalem component collection, includes alphabetically arranged emigration questionnaires which typically include supplemental documents reviewed by the IKG. I created a random sample of every 50<sup>th</sup> questionnaire from the Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection, which produced a sample of 486 questionnaires. Random sampling produces an unbiased representation of a whole population, and thus this sample allows me to generalize how the Jews of Vienna succeeded in fleeing from Austria.

Previous historians who have written about Viennese Jewry under the Nazi regime have taken a top-down approach, centered on the Nazi administration and the Jewish functionaries. In *Eichmann's Jews: The Jewish Administration of Holocaust Vienna, 1938-1945*, Doron Rabinovici argued that Jewish functionaries in the IKG (and the later Jewish Council) were forced to cooperate with Nazi authorities in order to help Jews emigrate.<sup>21</sup> Austrian historian Hans Safrian's *Eichmann's Men* discredited the idea that Adolf Eichmann's creative genius was responsible for the "Vienna Model" of enforcing migration, instead attributing the policy's success partly to the antisemitism already present in Austria.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to this top-down approach, social historian Marion Kaplan argued that German Jews realized that they needed to emigrate before Kristallnacht as Aryanization impoverished them in 1938.

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<sup>21</sup> Rabinovici, *Eichmann's Jews*.

<sup>22</sup> Hans Safrian, *Eichmann's Men*, trans. Ute Stargardt (German original, 1993 New York: Cambridge University Press and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2010).

She also argued that women recognized earlier than men that they should emigrate.<sup>23</sup>

Most recently in contrast to the top-down approach, social historian Ilana Offenberger, who also relied on the records of the IKG for her 2017 *The Jews of Nazi Vienna, 1938-1945: Rescue and Destruction*, argued that the leaders of the IKG cooperated with the Germans only in the hope of prolonging the lives of members of Jewish community. Offenberger also argued that members of the Jewish community were not passive.<sup>24</sup>

Rather than centering the Nazi administration and Jewish communal functionaries, I am concerned here with how individuals engaged with the emigration process and coped with the antisemitic policies and violence. I demonstrate the creativity and resilience of the Viennese Jews who applied to the Jewish community for assistance in emigrating. This approach allows me to understand those Jews who between 1938 and 1940 had both the opportunity and resolve to emigrate. By shifting perspective to those who applied for financial aid from the IKG, I demonstrate the harrowing effect of Nazi policies and violence on individual Jewish families across the economic spectrum.

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<sup>23</sup> Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5, 64.

<sup>24</sup> Offenberger, 280.

## The Decision to Flee

Before the *Anschluss*, Vienna was home to a thriving Jewish community. By 1938, approximately 170,000 Jews accounted for 9.4% of the city's population.<sup>25</sup> During the interwar period, Jews clustered in contiguous neighborhoods in districts which themselves bordered each other along both sides of the Danube Canal.<sup>26</sup> The second district, Leopoldstadt, housed one third of Vienna's Jews including rich and poor Jews. Twelve percent of Viennese Jews lived in the ninth district bordering Leopoldstadt to the west, Alsergrund, including Jewish intellectuals and white-collar employees. Working-class Jews and Jewish Galician war refugees lived in congested conditions in the twentieth district, Brigittenau, which adjoined Leopoldstadt to the northwest. Jewish professionals and successful businessmen resided in the first district, the Inner City.<sup>27</sup> The city had long attracted Jews from other parts of Austria-Hungary to Vienna, making the Austrian capital home to one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe before World War I, and the largest Jewish community in the German-speaking world after the war.<sup>28</sup> In Vienna, Jews acculturated into German society while maintaining a strong Jewish identity.<sup>29</sup> Jews participated in German culture, from literature and music to the avant-garde, and at the same time lived in Jewish neighborhoods, worked in the same professions, attended the same schools, generally married other Jews, and participated in Jewish organizations.<sup>30</sup> In the

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<sup>25</sup> Rosenkranz, 13.

<sup>26</sup> Harriet Pass Friedenreich. *Jewish Politics in Vienna, 1918-1938* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Friedenreich, 13-14.

<sup>28</sup> Rabinovici, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Rozenblit, 195.

<sup>30</sup> Rozenblit, 2, 147.

1930s, Jews also remained prominent in Viennese economy and culture.<sup>31</sup>

Although the dire situation in Germany alarmed Viennese Jews after 1933, they generally regarded themselves as Austrian and therefore safe from the looming threat of Nazism,<sup>32</sup> similar to German Jews who regarded themselves as German.<sup>33</sup> While emigration was an option prior to 1938, most Austrian Jews did not attempt to emigrate until the Nazis annexed Austria, demonstrating their sense of security until 1938. Between 1933, when the Nazi party came to power in Germany, and 1938, when the Third Reich annexed Austria, only 1,739 Austrian Jews emigrated.<sup>34</sup> The arrival of the Nazi regime, however, shattered the Viennese Jewish community's sense of security, in comparison to German Jews who lost their security gradually.<sup>35</sup> The *Anschluss* also heralded systematic economic devastation for the Jews of Vienna. The Nazis embarked on an immediate process of expropriating the Jews, called Aryanization. Under Aryanization, the Nazi Party outright claimed Jewish assets as property of the Reich, forced Jewish businesses to sell out, and engaged hostile takeover of Jewish businesses.<sup>36</sup> Threatening Jews with beating or imprisonment, Austrian Nazis also stole Jewish wealth and destroyed stocks in Jewish enterprises.<sup>37</sup>

The IKG questionnaires clearly demonstrate the level to which the Nazi regime forcibly impoverished the Jews newly under their control. The variety of occupations represented in the questionnaires reveals how effectively Nazi policy

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<sup>31</sup> Offenberger, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Offenberger, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Kaplan, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Offenberger, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Kaplan, 6.

<sup>36</sup> David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933-1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 154.

<sup>37</sup> Cesarani, 153.

forced Jews out of every level of the Austrian economy. Jews of all occupations and socioeconomic classes experienced economic ruin at the hands of the Nazis. Of the sampling of questionnaires reviewed for this study, approximately 29% of the applicants worked in offices as civil servants, clerks, salesmen, or business managers (*Beamte*), 22% worked as artisans, 17% as shop owners and wholesalers, 8% as members of the free professions (doctors, lawyers, professors, rabbis, and journalists), 7% were engaged in housework (women), and 5% were workers in factories or workshops (*Arbeiter*). The rest listed themselves as retirees, students, performing artists, or left blank the section of the form where profession was to be indicated.<sup>38</sup> The fact that only 17% of Viennese Jews were shop owners and wholesalers meant that many Jews were already dispossessed before World War II. In contrast, before World War I, nearly 50% of Viennese Jews were merchants, including wholesalers and shopkeepers.<sup>39</sup> For Jews, working in managerial careers such as clerks or salesmen had guaranteed a rise in social status, income, and prestige.<sup>40</sup> This economic division in 1938 to 1940, with a high percentage of artisans, also shows that the Viennese Jews were not as prosperous before World War II as they were before World War I, when few Jews were artisans.<sup>41</sup> The Nazis expropriated even the poorest Jews, however, alongside those Jews who had experienced a rise in social status.

This economic attack, however, did not have a great impact on traditional

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<sup>38</sup> These percentages do not add up to 100% because applicants often listed multiple jobs.

<sup>39</sup> Rozenblit, 59, Table 3.6: Occupations of IKG Taxpayers from Vienna, Bohemia, Moravia, Galicia, and Hungary, 1855-1914 .

<sup>40</sup> Rozenblit, 58.

<sup>41</sup> Rozenblit, Table 3.14: Austrian Social Status Ranking of Jewish Grooms, 1870-1910, 67-68



gender roles. Between November and December 1938, 34,730 men and 8,606 women registered as emigrant heads-of-household.<sup>42</sup> Between 1938 and 1940, approximately 71% of the heads of household who submitted questionnaires were men and 29% were women.<sup>43</sup> Of the women who did submit questionnaires as heads-of-household, the majority were single, divorced, or widowed. While single men represented a significant portion of the questionnaire pool, most men reported that they were married, while few identified themselves as divorcés or widowers. Unlike in Germany where women were alert earlier to the dangers and wanted to flee before men recognized the need to flee,<sup>44</sup> Austrian Jewish men and women both recognized the need to flee at the same time. In the early years of the Nazi regime in Germany, Jewish women beseeched their husbands to apply for visas.<sup>45</sup> The fact that Viennese Jewish men and women recognized the necessity of flight at the same time, at the beginning of the Nazi regime in Austria, reflects the sheer violence of the *Anschluss* and the fact that all of the antisemitic policies which had taken five years to apply in Germany applied immediately in Austria.

Before the *Anschluss*, few Jewish households applied to the IKG for financial assistance; after the *Anschluss*, Austrian Jewish households underwent a dramatic shift. The *Anschluss* was the first pivotal moment which convinced Viennese Jews to flee the city. This is apparent in the questionnaires; approximately 60% of the processed questionnaires date between the *Anschluss* in March 1938 and

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<sup>42</sup> Offenberger, 89.

<sup>43</sup> Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>44</sup> Kaplan, 62-73.

<sup>45</sup> Kaplan, 63-69.

*Kristallnacht* in November 1938. Official IKG numbers released between 1938 and 1940 indicated that approximately 40,000 applicants with approximately 70,000 dependents had registered for emigration by November 1938.<sup>46</sup> In the period of time between *Kristallnacht* in November 1938 and the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the IKG processed nearly 35% of the total emigration questionnaires. The fact that this spike in applications occurred immediately after *Kristallnacht* indicates that *Kristallnacht* was a second impetus in the decision of Viennese Jews to flee. Between the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 and the Nazi order for the IKG to cease all emigration-aid activity in 1940, the IKG processed only 5% of the submitted questionnaires. The outbreak of World War II limited the ability of Viennese Jews to flee, even before official policy decisions made it so. Moreover, by the time the Nazis forced the IKG to stop processing questionnaires in 1940, very few countries were willing or able to accept Jewish refugees, even if Jews had managed to secure financial aid.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives. The IKG reported that 40,958 applicants with 67,858 dependents registered for emigration by August 15, 1938, but another IKG report indicated 43,336 applicants with 74,643 dependents by that date

<sup>47</sup> Kaplan, 129-130.

## The *Anschluss* and its Aftermath

Until 1938 the Nazi Party was illegal in Austria and had operated underground in the hopes of unifying Austria and Germany, a prospect expressly forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles in 1918.<sup>48</sup> On February 12, 1938, under direct pressure from Hitler, Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg reluctantly acceded to Nazi demands to include Nazi Party representation in the Austrian government. Schuschnigg accordingly appointed two Nazis, Arthur Seyss-Inquart and Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, to his cabinet.<sup>49</sup> With these two appointments, during the first week of March 1938 the emboldened Austrian Nazis openly demonstrated in Vienna.<sup>50</sup> Understanding that their community depended on an Austria independent of Nazi Germany, Austrian Jews collected money and campaigned in favor of the plebiscite Schuschnigg later called on Austrian independence.<sup>51</sup> Austrian and German Nazis, eager for annexation, forced Schuschnigg to cancel the planned plebiscite and resign on March 11, 1938; by the end of the day Seyss-Inquart was appointed Chancellor.<sup>52</sup>

On March 12, 1938, German troops peacefully entered Austria. On March 13, Nazi Germany legally annexed Austria in a union called the *Anschluss*. That morning, 18-year-old Viennese Jew George Clare, sitting in his father's study on *Nussdorferstrasse* in Vienna's ninth district, saw the Nazi party flags flying from the

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<sup>48</sup> Dieter Wagner and Gerhard Tomkowitz, *Anschluss: The Week Hitler Seized Vienna*, trans. Geoffrey Strachan (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 17.

<sup>49</sup> Wagner and Tomkowitz, 18.

<sup>50</sup> Wagner and Tomkowitz, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Friedenreich, 202.

<sup>52</sup> Wagner and Tomkowitz, 110-112, 132, 165.

windows and the rooftops.<sup>53</sup> He immediately thought of emigration to escape the new regime and wondered, “Emigrate? How? Where? Perhaps it would not be so bad after all? ...Should we just sit tight? ... Would they apply the Nuremberg racial laws? And even if they did was it inevitable that Father would lose his job [at a French bank]?”<sup>54</sup> George Clare’s musings and concerns—about emigration, about the application of Nazi racial laws to Austrian Jewry, and about the future of their livelihoods—were shared by Jews across the city. Two days later, now Reich Governor of the *Ostmark* (Austria) Seyss-Inquart welcomed Hitler to the Heldenplatz square in central Vienna to thunderous applause.<sup>55</sup> Within days of the *Anschluss*, Viennese Jews began to feel the impact of Nazi policy towards the Jews on their daily lives.

After the *Anschluss*, all anti-Jewish laws enacted in Germany between 1933 and 1938 applied immediately and all at once in Austria. Consequently, 1933 laws excluding Jews from the civil service, from German cultural life, and from high schools were enforced. In May 1938, the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 formally took effect in Austria. The Nuremberg Laws included the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor and the Reich Citizenship Law. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor prohibited marriages and extramarital sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews, the employment of German women under the age of 45 in Jewish households, and the raising by Jews of the Nazi flag.<sup>56</sup> The Reich Citizenship Law and its supplementary decrees defined Jews not as a religious

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<sup>53</sup> George Clare, *Last Waltz in Vienna: The Rise and Destruction of a Family, 1842-1942* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), 184.

<sup>54</sup> Clare, 184.

<sup>55</sup> Wagner and Tomkowitz, 226-229.

<sup>56</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews: Third Edition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 66.

affiliation but as a race, and excluded Jews from German citizenship. According to the Reich Citizenship Law, a Jew was defined as anyone who descended from at least three Jewish grandparents, or descended from at least two Jewish grandparents and belonged to a Jewish community on September 15, 1935 or later, or was married to a Jewish person on September 15, 1935 or later, or was the offspring of a marriage with a Jew after the Law for Protection of German Blood and Honor had gone into effect, or was born out of wedlock from a relationship with a Jew after July 31, 1936. A Jewish grandparent was defined as a member of a Jewish religious community.<sup>57</sup> Essentially, the Nuremberg Laws defined Jews by birth and blood rather than as a religious or cultural community. These laws separated Jews (racially defined) from “Aryans,” what the Nazis defined as the pure Germanic race.

Although Austrian Jews had been aware of Nazi policy towards the Jews in Germany, the *Anschluss* and its attendant onslaught of legislation took them by surprise.<sup>58</sup> While in Germany the Nazis implemented their anti-Jewish regulations over a period of five years, those same policies were brought bear on Viennese Jews within a matter of days of the *Anschluss*. For example, on March 15, 1938 the new regime ordered the discharge or dismissal of all Jewish civil servants, judges, attorneys, notaries, and military personnel.<sup>59</sup> This expulsion of Jews from public life served to separate them from other Austrians and disenfranchise Jews in civic life. Jewish defendants’ legal cases were automatically decided against them in court.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hilberg, 68.

<sup>58</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Jews and Intermarriage in Nazi Austria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3-4.

<sup>59</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Intermarriage in Nazi Austria*, 10-11.

<sup>60</sup> Rabinovici, 29.

On March 15, 1938, three days after the *Anschluss*, Reich Governor of the Ostmark Arthur Seyss-Inquart required that all public officials take an oath to Hitler; Jews were prohibited from taking such oaths, and were thus barred from holding public office, leaving many suddenly unemployed.<sup>61</sup> Within a week of the *Anschluss*, the regime expelled all Jewish students and faculty from the University of Vienna, although many Jews had already stopped attending university classes out of fear of persecution.<sup>62</sup> Each of these regulations systematically excluded Jews and deprived them of their livelihoods.

Additional Nazi laws further removed Jews from public life and restricted Jews' livelihoods. The IKG compiled a list of approximately one hundred provisions barring Jews from Viennese public life in 1938 alone.<sup>63</sup> For example, Nazi regulations prohibited Jews from working in real-estate firms, tourist agencies, information bureaus, and livestock and meat markets.<sup>64</sup> Jewish doctors were only allowed to treat Jewish patients, and Jews could no longer hold management positions in businesses.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the Nazis banned Jews from parks, swimming pools, and public benches. By July 1938, Viennese Jews were required to acquire and carry identity cards marked with "J" for *Jude*.<sup>66</sup> In summer 1938, Viennese Jews who did not already have a "Semitic" name according to the Ministry of the Interior had to take on a middle name: "Sara" for women and girls or "Israel" for men and boys.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Rabinovici, 28.

<sup>62</sup> Rabinovici, 29.

<sup>63</sup> Rabinovici, 29.

<sup>64</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Intermarriage in Nazi Austria*, 10-11.

<sup>65</sup> Rabinovici, 29.

<sup>66</sup> Bukey, *Jews and Intermarriage in Nazi Austria*, 10-11.

<sup>67</sup> Rabinovici, 30.

IKG questionnaires reflected these name requirements. These middle names and the mandatory “J” on their identity cards immediately identified Jews as such on their official documents, making them targets for discrimination. These restrictions on Jews in public life were the first steps excluding Jews from the larger society; the next step was expropriation.

The Nazis immediately began to aggressively Aryanize Jewish businesses, that is legally transferring ownership from Jews to non-Jews. The Nazi party forced Jews to sell their businesses and property at reduced rates or give up their property altogether. Rapid Aryanization proceeded at every level—from banks and industry to Jewish homes—and the process was often violent. Only days after the *Anschluss*, the SA killed the Jewish chairman of the board of the Rothschild-controlled *Kreditanstalt* bank, Franz Rothenberg. The Deutsche Bank then acquired the *Kreditanstalt*.<sup>68</sup> Following Reich Plenipotentiary Hermann Göring’s orders to appropriate Jewish property, Nazi administrators in Vienna established a Property Transfer Office, which, within months facilitated the transfer of 83% of the handicrafts sector, 26% of the industrial sector, 82% of the economic services sector, and 50% of the Jewish-owned businesses in Vienna to the Nazi Party.<sup>69</sup> Nazi authorities also Aryanized 44,000 of the 70,000 Jewish-owned apartments in Vienna by the end of 1938, leaving multiple families to share apartments with no plumbing or cooking facilities.<sup>70</sup> This organized appropriation and deprivation of Jewish livelihoods, combined with public humiliation and violence, dramatically deprived Viennese Jews of their public,

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<sup>68</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 243. The *Kreditanstalt* was one of 78 banks taken over by the SA (out of the 86 total banks before the *Anschluss*).

<sup>69</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 242-243.

<sup>70</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 243-244.

private, and economic lives, and they now lived in fear for their possessions, income, and personal safety.

The Jews of Vienna also faced outright looting at the hands of the state and ordinary Viennese as well as state-sponsored expulsion. Indiscriminate looting began before the *Wehrmacht* crossed the border. On the night of March 13-14, 1938, the SS, SA, and Austrian police began the organized looting of Jewish homes and businesses, with all valuables delivered to the Gestapo headquarters at the Hotel Metropol.<sup>71</sup> Squads of Austrian Nazis roamed the streets of Vienna for weeks in a campaign of Aryanization in which they robbed, beat, and murdered Jews at random. Insistent upon appropriating Jewish property for the Nazi party, Nazi officials made multiple attempts to control the Viennese antisemitic mobs by forbidding SA men from confiscating Jewish property or arresting Jews without the permission of a Nazi provincial chief. Reich Security Main Office Director Reinhard Heydrich threatened to deploy the Gestapo in order to impose discipline on the looters.<sup>72</sup> The chaotic violence and looting lasted until April 1938, when Reich Commissioner for Austria Josef Bürckel required reports on all stolen Jewish assets, businesses, and factories, and even pressed charges against Nazis who looted for their own benefit.<sup>73</sup> Government-organized random searches, confiscations, and arrests gradually supplanted the mob, streamlining the process by which Austrian Nazis appropriated Jewish wealth.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Rabinovici, 30.

<sup>72</sup> Safrian, 22.

<sup>73</sup> Norman Bentwich, "The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Austria 1938-42," in *The Jews of Austria: Essays on their Life, History and Destruction*, ed. Josef Fraenkel (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co. Ltd.), 470.

<sup>74</sup> Safrian, 29.



Another way the new Nazi regime sowed chaos in the lives of Viennese Jewry was by rounding up Jewish men and transporting them to the Dachau concentration camp; these roundups served to make Vienna *judenrein* and frighten those left behind. The first transport of 151 prominent Austrian Jews and non-Jews from Vienna to Dachau, located just outside Munich, occurred on April 1, 1938.<sup>75</sup> This first transport from Vienna in April 1938 occurred before the first transports within Germany, in November 1938 during *Kristallnacht*.<sup>76</sup> Between May 25 and 27, 1938, the Gestapo sent another 2,000 Jewish men to Dachau; 5,000 followed between May 2 and June 20, 1938, including two transports of 600 men each on May 31 and June 3, 1938.<sup>77</sup> Additional transports took place on June 15 (24 men), June 17 (96 men), June 24 (330 men) and June 25, 1938 (155 men).<sup>78</sup> These transports served the purpose of terrorizing Jews and supplying forced labor for Germany.<sup>79</sup> These transports effectively spread confusion and fear in the Jewish community. The Nazi authorities provided the Jewish community with no information on the deportees' destination.<sup>80</sup> These arrests made many Jewish families frantically decide to flee Austria; some households indicated on their IKG emigration questionnaires that a family member was imprisoned in Dachau and they desperately required assistance to flee the Reich. Until the war, prisoners could be released if they had an emigration visa and agreed to liquidate their businesses.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Offenberger, 102.

<sup>76</sup> Kaplan, 122.

<sup>77</sup> Rabinovici, 45; Offenberger, 101-102.

<sup>78</sup> Offenberger, 102.

<sup>79</sup> Offenberger, 102.

<sup>80</sup> Offenberger, 103.

<sup>81</sup> Cesarani, 199.

This terror was not limited to Viennese Jewry, many of whom fled the city in the immediate wake of the *Anschluss*. The 16,439 Jews living outside the former capital also faced ruthless violence, expropriation, and the threat of expulsion from their homes. Before the *Anschluss*, antisemites in Graz, Linz, and Salzburg attacked Jews, looted their homes and businesses, and desecrated their synagogues. After the *Anschluss*, local officials arrested Jews, expropriated their wealth, and expelled them from their homes.<sup>82</sup> The first documented expulsions of Austrian Jews occurred not in Vienna, but in the provinces. Nazis forced the Jews out of the provinces and into Vienna or out of Austria. In the Burgenland, a province close to Vienna, 50 Jews were forced into Rajka (Ragensdorf), Hungary in March and April 1938.<sup>83</sup> In September 1938, Jews in the town of Horn, Lower Austria, received twenty-four hours' notice to leave before the local notary disposed of their assets.<sup>84</sup> The 600 Jews of Linz, the capital of Upper Austria, were forced to flee by the end of September 1938.<sup>85</sup> As the Jews in the provinces and other major cities were expelled, many fled to Vienna itself, as evidenced by the hometowns they listed on their IKG questionnaires. While the violence in Vienna was generally undertaken by civilians, the terror in the provinces was systematically carried out by the Gestapo, the SS, and Nazi party activists and endorsed by the populace.<sup>86</sup> After the *Anschluss*, sporadic expulsions transitioned to systematic policy; in October 1938 head of the SS Heinrich

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<sup>82</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 138.

<sup>83</sup> Gerhard Baumgartner, "The First Documented Expulsion of Jewish Citizens from the Territory of the Third Reich in March and April 1938," paper presented at the symposium "Fleeing the Nazis: Austrian Jewish Refugees to the United States," US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, June 18, 2019). Presentation attended by author.

<sup>84</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria* 138.

<sup>85</sup> Bentwich, "The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Austria," 470.

<sup>86</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 139.

Himmler ordered the concentration of all Jews from Austrian provinces in Vienna. Following this directive, Adolf Eichmann, the head of the Jewish desk at the Gestapo who came to Vienna expressly to expel the Jews, ordered that the Jews either leave Austria by mid-December 1938 or move to Vienna by the end of 1938.<sup>87</sup> The organized nature of officially sanctioned antisemitic actions in the provinces, rather than the haphazard havoc wrought by the mobs in Vienna, characterized later expulsions from Vienna.

The Vienna Model, which established an office to centralize the bureaucratic paperwork necessary for emigration, sets the city of Vienna up as a unique case study because the Nazi regime applied systems developed in Vienna throughout the Reich. Organized by Adolf Eichmann, the Vienna Model, the centrally-coordinated forced expulsion of Jews from the Ostmark while divesting Jews of their wealth, informed later Nazi policies expelling Jews from the Reich.<sup>88</sup> Beginning in 1938, the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, or Security Service) administrators of Vienna including Adolf Eichmann and his staff restructured the Jewish community's administration and ultimately forced most of the Jews out of Austria, leaving their wealth behind.<sup>89</sup> Restructuring the Jewish administration served as a "prototype" for later Jewish councils in Eastern Europe under the Nazi regime.<sup>90</sup> Following the Vienna Model, Reinhard Heydrich established the *Reichszentrale für jüdische Auswanderung* (Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration) in 1939, allowing Jews to take only small amounts of cash with them when they emigrated, leaving the majority of their wealth

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<sup>87</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 245.

<sup>88</sup> Safrian, 2, 14.

<sup>89</sup> Safrian, 2.

<sup>90</sup> Rabinovici, viii.

behind, and forcing them to fund their own expulsion.<sup>91</sup> The IKG, previously a thriving center of Jewish religious and philanthropic life, was reconstituted to facilitate emigration, but it was not in control of emigration policy. The IKG operated under strict restrictions imposed by the *Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Office for Jewish Emigration), and ordinary members of the Jewish community applied to the IKG to escape the Nazi regime. Eichmann proved to his superiors in the SS that he could organize mass expulsions, and Nazi leaders applied those lessons in later deportations.<sup>92</sup>

As the state-sanctioned violence, arrests, and dispossessions created fear and gave Austrian Jews the impetus to flee, Eichmann got to work disbanding all formal Jewish organizations, reconstituting some under Nazi authority.<sup>93</sup> After May 1938, Eichmann closed all eight Jewish newspapers in Vienna, and oversaw the short-lived *Zionistische Rundschau* (Zionist Review), which served to disseminate Nazi regulations and legal provisions and encourage Jews to leave Vienna.<sup>94</sup> The *Zentralstelle*, founded in August 1938, served to streamline the bureaucratic process of emigration and expropriation. Prior to the establishment of this office, the IKG was overwhelmed by the tens of thousands of requests for departure authorizations. The uncoordinated German agencies involved in Jewish emigration also delayed the process by which Jews obtained necessary documents and emigrated.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, Adolf Eichmann demanded that 20,000 Jews per year emigrate.<sup>96</sup> Eichmann ordered

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<sup>91</sup> Safrian, 36-37.

<sup>92</sup> Safrian, 2.

<sup>93</sup> Safrian, 29.

<sup>94</sup> Rabonovici, 64.

<sup>95</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 244.

<sup>96</sup> Safrian, 29.

the head of the IKG, Josef Löwenherz, to create a central office for appropriating wealth from Jewish emigrants in order to fund the departure of Jewish emigrants without means.<sup>97</sup> Although Eichmann claimed in his 1961 war crimes trial in Israel that it was Löwenherz who initially suggested centralizing the emigration process, the initial idea to create the *Zentralstelle* most likely came from the SD office II-112, the Jewish Affairs department tasked with removing Jews from the Third Reich.<sup>98</sup> At Eichmann's behest, Löwenherz submitted a proposal for a central office that would arrange Viennese Jewish emigration. Eichmann turned the office into an instrument of terror over the IKG.

Alongside the Gestapo, the *Zentralstelle* under the de facto leadership of Eichmann coordinated Nazi terror in Austria. The *Zentralstelle* controlled the IKG, blackmailing Jews into leaving all of their assets behind in fear for their lives.<sup>99</sup> The *Zentralstelle* office negotiated entrance permits, obtained foreign currency, established and surveilled job retraining centers, published antisemitic decrees, and communicated with Viennese institutions involved in any aspect of Jewish expulsion.<sup>100</sup> In order to escape with their lives, the *Zentralstelle* obliged Jews to relinquish all of their assets. The office systematically expropriated Jewish wealth at every stage of the centralized process, but they would leave the office with a visa requiring them to leave Austria within ten days.<sup>101</sup> Beginning on March 12, 1938,

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<sup>97</sup> Rabinovici, 52.

<sup>98</sup> Rabinovici, 51. Friedländer had argued in 1997 that Löwenherz initially suggested the creation of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, but he cited Eichmann's testimony during his interrogation by Israeli police in 1960 as evidence (Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 244).

<sup>99</sup> Rabinovici, 52.

<sup>100</sup> Safrian, 31.

<sup>101</sup> Rabinovici, 52.

hundreds of thousands of Jews queued outside foreign consular offices in Vienna to secure visas and other necessary paperwork to flee Austria. Waiting on the streets of Vienna in spring 1938, Jews were harassed, chased, and attacked by uniformed men who were either Nazi officials or posing as Nazi officials.<sup>102</sup> Although Eichmann's centralization of the emigration process removed bureaucratic hurdles for desperate Jews, the *Zentralstelle* consolidated power with the SS so that the victims forcibly funded their own expulsion and management of Nazi offices.<sup>103</sup>

For those who could not escape the Nazi through emigration, some made their exit via suicide as the terror of daily life increased. Suicide, like the choice to emigrate, did not follow class, gender, or professional lines. Suicide victims included doctors, lawyers, writers, artists, professors, merchants, retired people, clerks, jewelers, factory owners, hospitality workers, and others; in short, no one single socioeconomic group opted for suicide.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, more men than women committed suicide. Statistics from 1938 reveal that in March 1938, 91 Jews committed suicide: 57 men, 34 women, and 11 who committed suicide together as married couples; in April 1938, 73 committed suicide: 45 men, 28 women, and 6 couples; in May 1938, 70 committed suicide: 43 men, 27 women, and 3 couples.<sup>105</sup> Although these numbers demonstrate the desperation and defiance of Jews to escape the grip of life under the Nazis by any means possible, the numbers also indicate that most Viennese Jews did not choose suicide.

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<sup>102</sup> Rabinovici, 38.

<sup>103</sup> Safrian, 33.

<sup>104</sup> Botz, *Wien vom "Anschluss" zum Krieg*, Table 2: 102.

<sup>105</sup> Botz, *Wien vom "Anschluss" zum Krieg*, Table 2: „Selbstmorde in Wien im März, April und May 1938“ (aus MD 3906/1938 Mag. Abt 47-Statistik), 100.

Many Jews sought to escape, but the options for securing a visa were small. The Evian Conference in July 1938 failed to provide any new opportunities for the Jews to find a haven. Delegates from 32 countries met in Evian, France to discuss options for resettling German and Austrian Jewish refugees. Most countries at the Evian Conference, including the United States, France, and Great Britain, made no official commitments to alleviate the crisis of German and Austrian Jews in Europe. For example, after the *Anschluss*, the United States combined its German and Austrian immigration quotas so that a total of 27,370 people could enter under the German quota per year; this quota created no new openings for refugees considering the crisis in Europe.<sup>106</sup> For Zionists, the conference confirmed that the Jews needed their own formal Jewish state.<sup>107</sup> Disappointed in the outcome of the Evian Conference, Jewish applicants to the IKG still attempted to obtain visas from the countries represented at the Evian Conference. For example, the United States filled its quota for German (including Austrian) immigrant visas from 1938 through 1940.<sup>108</sup>

Nazi authorities specifically targeted the IKG in their effort to remove Jewish leadership, demanding an inventory and plundering the IKG offices beginning on March 16<sup>th</sup> and occupied the IKG offices on March 18, 1938.<sup>109</sup> As part of their policy to make Vienna *judenrein*, the Gestapo permitted the IKG to operate on a limited basis to facilitate emigration; it dissolved the IKG, arrested its officers,

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<sup>106</sup> Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (New York, Waldon Press, 1970), 31.

<sup>107</sup> Feingold, 33.

<sup>108</sup> Feingold, 296.

<sup>109</sup> Rabinovici, 33.

reopened it under the auspices of Adolf Eichmann on May 2, 1938,<sup>110</sup> and demanded one million Reichsmarks in return for allowing the IKG to reopen under its control.<sup>111</sup> Eichmann converted the IKG from an organization run by an elected board of representatives to one overseen by the Director, Joseph Löwenherz, alone in charge of announcing discriminatory laws and facilitating emigration.<sup>112</sup> Eichmann required Löwenherz to seek his permission to contact Jewish agencies, such as HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) and the JDC (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee), both American Jewish philanthropic organizations,<sup>113</sup> to fund Jewish refugees' passage and secure affidavits for refugees entering the United States.<sup>114</sup> Within the first three weeks after it reopened, the IKG received 20,000 registrations for emigration, representing between 40,000 and 50,000 individuals since registrants submitted documents on behalf of their families.<sup>115</sup> In addition, the IKG Emigration Department interviewed 3,000 people per day as part of the application process.<sup>116</sup> The rate of incoming questionnaires from members of the Jewish community spiked in May, an indication of the impoverishment of the Jewish population as well as the decision of most Jews to leave after the *Anschluss*. In the sample, there were 2 cases each month in March and April and 198 in May, representing only 100 applications in the first two months, but almost 10,000 in May.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Bukey, 134.

<sup>111</sup> Bentwich, "The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Austria," 470.

<sup>112</sup> Rabinovici, 42.

<sup>113</sup> Safrian, 30.

<sup>114</sup> Offenberger, 131.

<sup>115</sup> Rosenkranz, "The *Anschluss* and the Tragedy of Austrian Jewry 1938-1945," in *The Jews of Austria: Essays on their Life, History and Destruction*, ed. Josef Fraenkel (London: Valentine, Mitchell & Co. Ltd, 1967), 487.

<sup>116</sup> Rosenkranz, "The *Anschluss* and the Tragedy of Austrian Jewry 1938-1945," 487.

<sup>117</sup> The number of cases is extrapolated from my sample of every 50<sup>th</sup> IKG questionnaire.



Viennese Jewry turned to the IKG in hopes of securing funding for emigration. As terror spread through the Jewish community of Vienna, the IKG Emigration Office received emigration questionnaires from Jews desperate to emigrate. The questionnaires demonstrate the depth and breadth of the effect of Nazi policies among Jews. The IKG asked applicants to indicate their job titles, their levels of occupational training and education, and their plans to continue their career. Most respondents indicated a preference to continue in their current occupations as shoemakers, butchers, salesmen, retailers, and shop managers, although some left the section of the form indicating their intended future career blank, probably to indicate that they were willing to take any job in their new homes. Jews from all walks of life except industrialists, who probably already had sufficient funds, submitted applications to the IKG. The IKG received applications from Jews primarily from Leopoldstadt (second district), where most of Vienna's Orthodox Jews, recent Galician Jewish immigrants, and Jews from Moravia and Hungary, resided, as well as from Alsergrund (ninth district).<sup>118</sup> Most Viennese Jews resided in the second and ninth districts, but the IKG also received applications from Jews who lived in other districts such as the working-class twentieth district.<sup>119</sup> The Nazis, after all, attacked Jews wherever they lived, spreading fear everywhere.

In the months following the *Anschluss*, Viennese Jews sought means to escape an increasingly dangerous and restrictive life in Vienna by applying to the IKG for financial aid to flee. Application processing spiked in May 1938 immediately after

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<sup>118</sup> Friedenreich, 13.

<sup>119</sup> Friedenreich, 13-14.

Eichmann announced his emigration policy to IKG leaders but tapered off in June and continued to drop off in September and October 1938. The initial spike was the first response to Eichmann's demand that 20,000 Viennese Jews emigrate within one year. In the sample there were nearly 40 cases in June 1938 representing 1,900 applications, but nearly 10 cases each in September and October 1938, representing under 1,000 applications between those two months. The decreased rate of applications following the spike in May 1938 coincided with the creation of the *Zentralstelle* in summer 1938 and the streamlining of the application process. The violence at that time also did not approach the levels of the *Anschluss*. Applications spiked again at the end of fall 1938 after *Kristallnacht* as Jews responded to the renewed violence and terror.

Mass arrests and imprisonment in concentration camps also drove Viennese Jews to seek funding for emigration. For example, merchant Ernst Illner indicated on his questionnaire, submitted on May 23, 1938, that he had no income to emigrate because he had spent the last ten weeks in the Dachau concentration camp.<sup>120</sup> Illner was one of 2,000 Jews seized in the *Judenaktion* of spring 1938 in Austria, when the SS seized victims off the street and took the prisoners to Dachau.<sup>121</sup> Sausage skin salesman Moses Torton wrote on June 21, 1938 that he was forced to liquidate his business. He or the family member who submitted the form on his behalf wrote “*in Haft*” on top of his questionnaire, revealing that Torton was imprisoned, possibly also

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<sup>120</sup> Ernst Illner Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.100, Reel 1106, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>121</sup> Cesarani, 165.

in Dachau.<sup>122</sup> Most men seized during this *Judenaktion* were released within twelve months so that they could emigrate, in keeping with Nazi policy of forced emigration.<sup>123</sup>

The information women supplied on their forms demonstrates their desperation for themselves and their families. In fact, many applicants used the phrase “*gar keine*” (none) as well as “*Kein Verdienst. Kein Vermögen*” (no income and no assets) to describe their financial destitution. Although there is an artful and formulaic quality to these answers, it was also true that Viennese Jews were dispossessed. That information also makes clear that Jews of all ages applied for aid and describe the structure of Jewish households. Middle-aged and young women alike applied to the IKG. Bertha Strasser, a 55-year-old widow, requested aid to reunite with her brother Joseph in Brussels. In the space provided to answer questions about her financial resources and plans for the future, she replied “*gar keine*” (none).<sup>124</sup> Nella Sternberg, a 49-year-old divorcee from Gross-Seelowitz, Moravia, who had lived in Vienna for 32 years, applied on behalf of herself and her daughter.<sup>125</sup> Paula Kampf, a single 55-year-old woman who indicated that she was a citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic, applied on behalf of herself and her sister-in-law.<sup>126</sup> Their applications indicate that

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<sup>122</sup> Moses (Max) Torton Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.46, Reel 1210, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>123</sup> Cesarani, 165.

<sup>124</sup> Bertha Strasser Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.240, Reel 1206, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>125</sup> Nella Sternberg Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.238, Reel 1204, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>126</sup> Paula Kampf Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.106, Reel 1111, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

their household structures were all-female.

While these middle-aged divorced women applied for aid, so too did their younger counterparts, and younger women were more likely to apply on behalf of households that included their brothers and fathers. Sixteen-year-old Lola Eckart from the white-collar ninth district of Vienna applied on January 12, 1938, well before the *Anschluss* but certainly amid heightened antisemitic persecution. She applied on behalf of her entire immediate family, including her parents, older brother, and older sister.<sup>127</sup> Her father Jakob, born in 1876 in Stryj, Galicia (now Ukraine), may have relied upon his Viennese-born children and their mother Amalia (born in 1884 in Vienna) for formal knowledge of the German language.<sup>128</sup> Her case is striking because at age 16 and younger than both of her siblings, Eckart already carried out a role normally borne by men or by older women. Like women in Germany,<sup>129</sup> Eckart recognized early the necessity of fleeing Austria. The questionnaires indicate that female applicants generally made the case that they would reunite with their families abroad, and that they recognized the pressing Nazi danger. While these specific women did not list any male relatives imprisoned in Dachau, these women's applications reflect the uniquely Viennese fact that with many men already in Dachau, women in Vienna already started stepping up to seek out avenues of emigration earlier than women in Germany.

The emigration questionnaires also provide insights into Jewish life elsewhere

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<sup>127</sup> Lola Eckart Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.43, Reel 1066, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Kaplan, 69.

in Austria, as Jews outside Vienna turned to the Viennese Jewish community for assistance to flee Austria amid Nazi violence in the provinces. Although most people who submitted applications to the IKG listed Vienna as their residence, some applicants listed other residences. Moreover, many Jews had fled to Vienna from other parts of Austria in response to antisemitic violence. In 1938 the IKG Vienna received applications from Jews who had resided in such places as Graz in Styria, and Klosterneuburg and Ravelsbach in Lower Austria. For example, Adolf God, a 26-year-old born in Vienna and living in Graz along with his wife Lola, listed an income of 100 dollars per month as a leatherworker and shoemaker.<sup>130</sup> He had returned to Vienna despite the Nazi terror there, hoping that it would be easier to flee from Vienna. The Schön family of Ravelsbach, headed by 54-year-old salesman Edmund Schön and his 53-year-old wife Malvine, came to Vienna destitute.<sup>131</sup> The Schöns listed two children, aged 18 and 25, well as Edmund Schön's 46-year old sister. No member of the family listed any specific prior affiliation with Vienna until they arrived in 1938 seeking financial assistance. Like many Jewish families immediately impoverished under the Nazi regime in Austria, the Schön family turned to the Jewish community for financial support to flee.

Applicants' responses to the questions about why they were applying for financial aid reveals much about the effect of Nazi policies on their families and daily lives. Applicants made a case for their financial need. In most cases, people applying

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<sup>130</sup> Adolf God Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.72, Reel 1084, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>131</sup> Edmund Schön Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.223, Reel 1194, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

for aid indicated they had no income, occasionally indicating why that was the case. Some families provided an abundance of detail to demonstrate their need. In August 1938, merchant Michael Friedler reported that his entire family, including his wife and two children, aged 3 and 6, intended to flee to Palestine but lacked the means to travel. Friedler, forced by Aryanization policies to close his shop, was living with his family off limited rations, with no relatives to turn to for financial assistance.<sup>132</sup> Most Viennese Jews had no income because they had lost their jobs due to Aryanization; this information was common knowledge and Friedler and others may have found it unnecessary to list such well-known details.

The case of the Bittmann family demonstrates the hardships Viennese Jewish families endured as they sought to flee. Schaje (Sami) Bittmann from Klosterneuburg submitted his questionnaire on May 16, 1938 on behalf of himself, his wife Elka (Elsa), and their sons.<sup>133</sup> A close reading of the names in this file, in which the Bittmann family listed both their Yiddish and Germanized names, indicates that the family wanted to highlight both their Austrian and Jewish identities in the formal questionnaire process, although their Austrian identities did not protect them from the Nazi regime. The Yiddish names were also likely the official names used on their passports, while in interwar Austria they used Germanized names. The Bittmann family Germanized but left Austria as Jews, including with their Yiddish names. In

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<sup>132</sup> Michael Friedler Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.1, Reel 1078, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>133</sup> Schaje (Sami) Bittman Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.21, Reel 1046, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives. The elder son was named Menasse (Max) and later changed his name to Murray; for privacy reasons I have omitted the name of the younger son.

January 1940, two years after Schaje Bittmann submitted the questionnaire to the IKG, Elka Bittmann got back in touch with the IKG. The family, she wrote, had no income, and Nazis had seized their possessions on March 16, 1938, shortly after the *Anschluss*. On September 11, 1939, Schaje was imprisoned in Buchenwald concentration camp. She concluded her missive with a desperate appeal for passage for herself and Schaje aboard a ship to New York; Schaje's sister in Hoboken, NJ had already taken in Menasse and Ignatz.<sup>134</sup> Until December 1939, labor camp inmates who could prove that they could immediately emigrate could be released, and the IKG prioritized such applications like that of Schaje Bittmann and expedited them in order to facilitate release.<sup>135</sup>

Viennese Jews listed every detail they could about their occupations and experiences on their questionnaires which might prove useful in their applications for aid. Some used the questionnaires to describe their level of poverty. Rudy Schiffmann, who worked in leather and paper production, underlined the word “*vernichtend*” in the income portion of the questionnaire, emphasizing that all his economic assets were “destroyed.”<sup>136</sup> While most applicants stated that they would preferably continue in their previous occupations, many were also willing to take on a new occupation. Friedrich Blau, a master goldsmith who lived in the eighth district,

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<sup>134</sup> Schaje (Sami) Bittmann Emigration Questionnaire, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M).

<sup>135</sup> Offenberger, 186.

<sup>136</sup> Rudy Schiffmann Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.217, Reel 1190, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

wrote that he would “seize any available work opportunity.”<sup>137</sup> Paul Goldberger, who had managed a shoe store for 20 years and lived in the first district, hoped to continue in that occupation in the “USA, England, or English colonies.” Goldberger also wrote that he had experience in hotel management (*Gastgewerbe*).<sup>138</sup> Goldberger, like Blau, was willing to leave behind his profession if only he could flee Austria. In contrast, psychiatrist Fritz Kobler<sup>139</sup> and pediatrician Franz Haacker<sup>140</sup> both hoped to continue as doctors but indicated flexibility in their destinations. Unlike Kobler, who lived in the sixth district, Haacker lived in the wealthier second district.<sup>141</sup> The fact the IKG received detailed applications from factory workers to doctors indicates the widespread desperation Jews felt under the Nazi regime. Applicants specified flexibility in their destinations, marketable skills, willingness to attempt new professions, poverty, and willingness to leave Austria behind. Viennese Jews, desperate to leave Austria, were willing to go anywhere and do anything to earn a living.

The questionnaire included a section in which applicants could list their

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<sup>137</sup> Friedrich Blau Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.21, Reel 1047, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>138</sup> Paul Goldberger Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.72, Reel 1084, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives. Goldberger’s wife and son later escaped to England in March 1939.

<sup>139</sup> Fritz Kobler Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590, 118, Reel 1118, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives. Kobler escaped to Shanghai in 1938 and immigrated to the United States in 1968, where he practiced psychiatry for 40 years in Maryland. (Sheridan Lyons, “Dr. Fritz Kobler, 90, psychiatrist who escaped Holocaust, unrest in China,” *Baltimore Sun*, obituary, June 5, 2001).

<sup>140</sup> Franz Haacker Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.85, Reel 1094, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*



preferred destinations. In most cases, Jewish applicants stated that they would go anywhere not under German control. With few options available, Palestine was one of the most important places that Jews hoped to go; it was controlled by the British, and for Zionists it represented hope of building a Jewish state. The British Foreign Office, however, downplayed the role of Palestine in any solution to the Jewish refugee crisis.<sup>142</sup> British Mandatory authorities limited Jewish immigration to Palestine in response to violent Arab anti-Jewish protests in 1921 and 1936 and concern that additional Jewish immigration would again trigger unrest. Jewish emigration to Palestine, therefore, never exceeded 30% of all Jewish emigrants.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, Zionist organizations engaged in visa-less illegal transports to Palestine beginning in 1939.<sup>144</sup> Eichmann forced the IKG and Zionist organizations to include concentration camp inmates on illegal transports to Palestine. While IKG formally objected to these illegal transports, in March 1939 the IKG sent Eichmann a list of transports leaving Vienna which included illegal transports to Palestine. On this list, IKG officials substituted a different destination so that refugees might still obtain valid transit visas.<sup>145</sup> In May 1939, in keeping with previous policy, the British government released a White Paper that limited Jewish immigration to 75,000 for 5 years, with restrictions on the purchase of land for Jewish settlement. The policy paper alienated Jews all over the world and especially Zionists.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Cesarani, 76.

<sup>143</sup> Cesarani, 130-131.

<sup>144</sup> Rabinovici, 62.

<sup>145</sup> Rabinovici, 61-62.

<sup>146</sup> Cesarani, 289. The White Paper of 1939 also stipulated that Palestine would be given self-determination after a decade. It was intended to both appease the Arabs and reduce British peace-keeping activities in Palestine.

Nevertheless, men and women of all ages mentioned Palestine as a possible destination, some as their sole preference, and others as their last resort. The British still allowed a variable number of Jewish immigrants per month, based on economic and political considerations, and allowed the Jewish Agency for Palestine (now the Jewish Agency for Israel) to distribute certificates for entry up to that number. The Jewish Agency was created in 1929 in Jerusalem to foster the immigration and absorption of Jews from the Jewish diaspora into Mandatory Palestine. It was concerned with applicants' technical skills and suitability for agricultural work and tended to favor young applicants.<sup>147</sup> The Palestine Office in Vienna, which facilitated Jewish immigration to Palestine, took its directives from the Jewish Agency and distributed certificates. In January 1938, Lola Ekart, age 16, specifically indicated that she wanted to travel to Holland and attend a *Hakhshara*, a Zionist training program where participants learned technical skills to settle in Palestine.<sup>148</sup> As the situation in Vienna deteriorated, young applicants like Lola Ekart attempted to gain the necessary skills to improve their chances of immigrating to Palestine. For Ekart, Palestine was her first choice and she demonstrated willingness to go to great lengths to qualify for a coveted certificate to Palestine.

In most cases, however, Jewish applicants listed multiple possible destinations because they were willing to flee anywhere. For example, salesman Moses Torton listed the United States and Australia as his preferences, indicating that he was only

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<sup>147</sup> Rabinovici, 19, 48-49.

<sup>148</sup> Lola Ekart Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.43, Reel 1066, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

interested in Palestine if the other two options were not possible.<sup>149</sup> In addition, 16% of applicants in 1938 before Kristallnacht specified Latin American countries, and 6% of applicants specifically listed Argentina as an intended destination. For instance, in 1938 shoemaker Isidor Wurmbrand noted that his niece's husband lived in Buenos Aires.<sup>150</sup> Listing a relative in the country of destination was one way of indicating that he had a means of support in another country. The previous year, Argentina had admitted 5,178 Jewish refugees; in 1938, Argentina admitted 1,050 and in 1939, 4,300.<sup>151</sup> Beginning in 1940, the numbers of Jewish refugees entering Latin American republics like Argentina and Brazil decreased steadily as these countries were unwilling to take financial responsibility for destitute refugees.<sup>152</sup> In 1938 before Kristallnacht, 9% of applicants also listed China or specifically Shanghai as an intended destination. Unlike most ports of entry, Shanghai did not require entrance visas. The fact that one bureaucratic hurdle was removed made the city a place of refuge.<sup>153</sup> Ernst Illner, who applied for financial aid to emigrate in May 1938, listed his intended destination as China.<sup>154</sup> Solomon Gustein, a poultry worker who also applied in May 1938, already had relatives living in Shanghai who were willing to

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<sup>149</sup> Moses (Max) Torton Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.46, Reel 1210, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>150</sup> Isidor Wurmbrand Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.269, Reel 1228, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>151</sup> Feingold, 49.

<sup>152</sup> Feingold, 49.

<sup>153</sup> Cesarani, 218.

<sup>154</sup> Ernst Illner Emigration Questionnaire, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M).

supply funds for passage.<sup>155</sup>

Despite restrictive international immigration policies, Jewish refugees did flee Austria in 1938. Within six months of the *Anschluss*, 45,000 Austrian Jews emigrated to destinations such as the United States and Palestine or crossed the borders into Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Switzerland.<sup>156</sup> In 1938 before *Kristallnacht*, over 20% of applicants specified that they wanted to emigrate to the United States and nearly 32% specified North America in general, likely meaning the United States or Canada. In addition, 11% specified Palestine, and 18% specified other former English colonies, most notably Australia and South Africa. Twelve percent of applicants before *Kristallnacht*, hoping to await their visas in other countries outside the borders of the Reich, noted specific European countries or simply wrote “Northern Europe” or “Western Europe” on the portion of the application where they could specify their intended destinations. In response to their rapid exclusion from daily public life in Vienna, and the sheer brutality of the Gestapo and the SD, Jews sought many avenues of escape.

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<sup>155</sup> Solomon Gustin Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.84, Reel 1092, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>156</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 245.

## *Kristallnacht*: November 1938

On the night of November 9, 1938, the Nazis carried out a state-organized pogrom against Jews in the Third Reich known as *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass. Two days earlier, Herschel Grynszpan, a Polish Jew, distraught that his parents would be deported from Germany to Poland, shot Nazi consular official Ernst vom Rath in Paris. When vom Rath died of his wounds on November 9<sup>th</sup>, Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels seized upon his death as pretext for a nationwide pogrom against Jews. In Vienna, the IKG had fearfully condemned the assassination of Ernst vom Rath to Adolf Eichmann, to no avail.<sup>157</sup> Unlike in Germany, even before *Kristallnacht*, Nazi violence against the Jews in Austria was widespread. After all, in the months between March and October, the Nazis had busied themselves smashing the windows of synagogues, desecrating Torah scrolls, destroying prayer rooms, and setting fire to the largest synagogue in the Vienna's second district.<sup>158</sup> In other regions of the *Ostmark*, the Nazis ransacked Jews in towns, raping and maiming their victims.<sup>159</sup> Although *Kristallnacht* was not the first instance of Nazi terror, *Kristallnacht* marked the second pivotal moment when Viennese Jews decided to flee the Reich, and indeed when Jews throughout the Reich attempted to flee.<sup>160</sup>

On *Kristallnacht*, mobs plundered and destroyed Jewish homes, shops, and synagogues, while forcing the Jews to watch. Reinhard Heydrich ordered the SD and

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<sup>157</sup> Rabinovici, 58.

<sup>158</sup> Rabinovici, 57.

<sup>159</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 144.

<sup>160</sup> Kaplan, 49.

the Gestapo to burn synagogues, destroy (but not loot) Jewish businesses and apartments, and arrest rich male Jews and send them to concentration camps.<sup>161</sup> Firemen and police stood by and prevented onlookers from putting out the fires in burning synagogues. Mobs rounded up Jews for public harassment and abuse in the middle of the night. The SS also rounded up 29,845 Jewish men from Germany and Austria and sent them to concentration camps in Germany: 11,000 to Dachau, 9,845 to Buchenwald, and 9,000 to Sachsenhausen,<sup>162</sup> releasing them only if their families obtained visas. In Germany and Austria, Nazi gangs destroyed 267 synagogues and 7,500 businesses, and they murdered 91 people.<sup>163</sup> Hundreds more Jews committed suicide or died as a result of mistreatment in the camps.<sup>164</sup>

The chaos in Vienna in particular intensified on *Kristallnacht*. Nazi party functionaries and gangs torched 42 synagogues and prayer houses, forced Jews out of 1,950 apartments in the first, second, and fourth districts, beating them up and arresting them, ransacked the offices of the IKG; arrested Jewish officials, demolished food kitchens, and pillaged Jewish shops and businesses.<sup>165</sup> Meanwhile, Nazis beat 27 people to death in Vienna and arrested 6,547 Jewish men, deporting 3,700 of them to Dachau.<sup>166</sup> Of the Jews taken into custody, Nazis severely injured 88. Hundreds of Jews committed suicide.<sup>167</sup> Eichmann pressured the IKG by leveraging the men imprisoned in Dachau and Buchenwald. He only permitted the

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<sup>161</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 274.

<sup>162</sup> Kaplan, 122.

<sup>163</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 276.

<sup>164</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 276.

<sup>165</sup> Rabinovici, 58; Offenberger, 176.

<sup>166</sup> Rabinovici, 58.

<sup>167</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 144.

release of inmates who already had visas and emigration papers, forcing the prisoners' families to obtain their emigration materials as quickly as possible.<sup>168</sup>

In Vienna, *Kristallnacht* proved to be another shock to the Jewish community. Individual Viennese antisemites took advantage of the opportunity of *Kristallnacht* to rob and humiliate their Jewish neighbors. SS reports indicate that bystanders encouraged arsonists and participated in the plunder.<sup>169</sup> Nazis in Vienna also subjected the Jewish community to public humiliation and torture. For instance, in Vienna's twentieth district (Brigittenau), Nazis forced two hundred women to dance naked in a basement. In general, the Viennese public approved of and participated in these atrocities, protesting the disorder only in response to destruction they deemed excessive or because they felt they deserved more "spoils."<sup>170</sup> Antisemitic violence in Vienna continued through December, with eager participation by ordinary men and women. The level of violence in Vienna exceeded that of other cities in the Reich in terms of popular participation, duration, and lack of remorse demonstrated by participants.<sup>171</sup>

Although *Kristallnacht* occurred throughout the Reich, Nazi leaders reacted with fury specifically to the chaos of the November Pogrom in Vienna and the missed opportunities to centralize Jewish wealth in the hands of the Nazi Party. The party leadership was also concerned that lawless mob violence might alienate the public. Hermann Göring, one of the most powerful leaders of the Nazi party and an architect of the Nazi police state, was incensed by the wanton destruction of valuable property

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<sup>168</sup> Rabinovici, 60.

<sup>169</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 145.

<sup>170</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 145.

<sup>171</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 146.

the party could have stolen from Viennese Jews in particular. Party leadership redirected the uncontrolled looting in Vienna to directly benefit the Nazi party.<sup>172</sup> After *Kristallnacht*, the *Zentralstelle* required the IKG to provide asset lists of objects of value, and those assets were subject to a 100% tax.<sup>173</sup> Aryanization of Jewish homes and business also continued under the *Zentralstelle*. The Nazis forced the IKG to keep a card file of vacated Jewish homes for redistribution to “Aryans” and froze the assets of any Jews sent to concentration camps.<sup>174</sup> These policies represented a continuation of the pattern of state-sponsored violence and centralizing Jewish property in the hands of the Nazis.

After *Kristallnacht*, Nazi leaders enacted many bureaucratic measures to remove Jews from public life in the Reich, limit their mobility, and deprive them of their livelihood. These directives came from the highest echelons of the Nazi Party: Nazi party leader and architect of the Nazi police state Hermann Göring himself ordered, based on a directive from Hitler, that the Jews should pay to repair their own businesses, and the party would then expropriate those businesses.<sup>175</sup> The Gestapo disseminated these regulations through the Ministry of Propaganda’s Reich-wide *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt* (Jewish News), which supplanted the *Zionistische Rundschau* on November 9, 1938.<sup>176</sup> On November 12, 1938, the “Decree on An Atonement Fine for the Jews with German Citizenship” fined the Jews one billion Reichsmarks, confiscated Jewish insurance policies, and transferred all

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<sup>172</sup> Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria*, 145-146.

<sup>173</sup> Rabinovici, 52.

<sup>174</sup> Rabinovici, 32.

<sup>175</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 273.

<sup>176</sup> Rabinovici, 64.



indemnification payments for the damages incurred on *Kristallnacht*.<sup>177</sup> That meant that in addition to suffering the damages of *Kristallnacht*, the Jewish community was also forced to pay their oppressors for the damages. Göring also banned all Jewish business activity in the Reich.<sup>178</sup> On the same day, the Nazis also removed Jews from all aspects of economic life in the Reich, such as retail positions or owning businesses.<sup>179</sup> By the end of November 1938, Jews were banned from most public places such as entertainment venues and non-Jewish schools.<sup>180</sup> On November 16, the regime revoked the right of Jewish veterans to wear their uniform. On November 28, the regime imposed restrictions on Jewish movement throughout the city, so that they were not allowed to enter certain districts or appear in public at certain times.<sup>181</sup> Each of these specific measures was designed to erase Jews from daily life throughout the Reich.

The *Zentralstelle* coordinated Nazi anti-Jewish policy in Austria and terrorized the IKG. To obtain necessary emigration documents, Jews entered the *Zentralstelle* and proceeded from counter to counter as party officials gradually confiscated all their wealth. They braved SS men who viciously whipped people waiting to enter the office.<sup>182</sup> The *Zentralstelle* obligated refugees to arrange their own departure. Prospective emigrants had to obtain certificates from customs authorities stating that they owed no taxes. Refugees would likely be arrested and deported to a concentration camp if they did not depart by a date specified by the

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<sup>177</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 149.

<sup>178</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 258.

<sup>179</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 149; Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 164.

<sup>180</sup> Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 164-165.

<sup>181</sup> Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 164.

<sup>182</sup> Rabinovici, 52.

*Zentralstelle*.<sup>183</sup> Nazi officials boasted of the *Zentralstelle*'s efficiency at conference on November 12, 1938, just days after *Kristallnacht*. At a time when 19,000 Jews had emigrated from the *Altreich* (Germany), in Austria the *Zentralstelle* made it possible for 50,000 Jews to leave the *Ostmark* (Austria).<sup>184</sup>

Nazi violence and efforts to expropriate the Jews affected Jews of all social classes, as can be seen on the applications Jews submitted to the IKG for financial assistance. Most of these applicants stated that they had no income, or they simply left blank the answer space for income.<sup>185</sup> Some also stated that not only did they have no income, but they no longer possessed any savings or money at all (“*Kein Vermögen. Kein Einkommen.*”).<sup>186</sup> As earlier, applicants for assistance were willing to go anywhere. Wealthy Jews described their marketable skills and overseas friends and family, while poorer Jews simply indicated that they had nothing at all. Both groups indicated that they were willing to travel anywhere in the world. While some applicants mentioned specific locations where they could join relatives, others simply listed “*irgendwo*” (anywhere). As before, those who applied to the IKG for aid at the end of 1938 came from all over the city.<sup>187</sup> Aryanization affected all Jews, and they realized they had to emigrate.

Although the Jewish community of Vienna was accustomed to antisemitic

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<sup>183</sup> Rabinovici, 52.

<sup>184</sup> Rabinovici, 53.

<sup>185</sup> A/W 2590, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>186</sup> Israel Flachs Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590,55, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>187</sup> A/W 2590, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

violence by late 1938, *Kristallnacht* confirmed for many the fact that they had to flee. The IKG registered 34,730 men and 8,606 women as emigrants in its budget for the months of November and December 1938.<sup>188</sup> The IKG processed twice as many emigration questionnaires in December 1938, the month after *Kristallnacht*, as compared to November. Applicants' responses to the emigration questionnaires demonstrated that Austrian Jews understood that *Kristallnacht* was a signal for them to flee, even without their property. Adolf Wieselmann, for example, a 59-year-old butcher from the third district, submitted his questionnaire on the day of the pogrom and indicated no available funds for emigration and no available income. In his desperation, he noted laconically that he would "search for a new job" to support his wife and two children.<sup>189</sup>

In addition to filling out the questionnaires, applicants also submitted supplementary supporting documents to bolster their cases. On November 16, 1938, 29-year-old silk merchant Maurycy Lind of the twentieth district wrote that he had virtually no income and no funds available to cover emigration fees; he had lived in Vienna for 24 years, and he required aid to flee to Holland. A note in his file indicates that he came from the "best" family, was totally without possessions, and lived with his mother-in-law.<sup>190</sup> Since Lind resided in the twentieth district, a poor district, "best" likely refers not necessarily to his family's wealth, but rather to his family's

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<sup>188</sup> Offenberger, Table 3.1, 89.

<sup>189</sup> Adolf Wieselmann Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.265, Reel 1225, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>190</sup> Maurycy Lind Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2950.141, Reel 1133, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

good standing in the Jewish community. The fact that he included this note indicates the lengths he was willing to go to prove he was worthy of financial aid. In another instance, Anna Stern, a 38-year-old married woman from Vienna's first district, noted that she had 400 Reichsmarks saved for emigration but no income.<sup>191</sup> Her file includes a note stating that she had a passport and visa for Switzerland, no known relatives, and had recently supported herself as a domestic.<sup>192</sup> Although her visa was for Switzerland, she may have transited through Switzerland to her ultimate destination, Australia.<sup>193</sup> Stern supplied this supplementary documentation in order to strengthen her case that she could make a living for herself overseas, and would likely be a welcome immigrant in her new home.

Such notes, intended to aid in the processing of the applicants' files, also offer useful biographical information and contribute to the broader picture of the Jewish community of Vienna in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*. One such applicant in mid-January 1939, 18-year-old student Erich Wellisch, from Wiesenfeld, Lower Austria, included with his application materials a letter from his rabbi.<sup>194</sup> Rabbi A. Schächter recommended his former student for a travel grant to New York and indicated that Wellisch was able to provide 250 Reichsmarks of his own. He had asked the IKG in St. Pölten, Lower Austria, for a contribution for Wellisch's emigration. The IKG in St. Pölten wrote that it was familiar with Erich Wellisch and testified to his father

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<sup>191</sup> Anna Stern Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.236, Reel 1203, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> Erich Wellisch Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.263, Reel 1224, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

Hugo's reputable business but given the current circumstances it could make no promises about his emigration prospects. Wellisch submitted his questionnaire through the IKG regional office in St. Pölten. Eventually the IKG Vienna office processed Wellisch's request. Wellisch was able to book passage on a ship bound for New York, but it is not clear if he actually went there.

The months following *Kristallnacht* marked a substantial spike in applications to the IKG for financial assistance for emigration as Jews attempted to flee the Reich. In comparison to approximately 350 Jewish households who applied to the IKG in the month before *Kristallnacht*, the IKG Vienna processed applications from 650 Jewish households in November, the majority after November 10<sup>th</sup>. In December 1938, the IKG processed questionnaires from approximately 1,200 households; 1,250 in January 1939; 1,450 in February 1939; 800 in March 1939; and 300 in April 1939.<sup>195</sup> These trends show Viennese Jewry's ongoing response to the deluge of Nazi anti-Jewish legislation which began with the *Anschluss* and continued after *Kristallnacht*. The IKG processed questionnaires from approximately 1,000 Jewish households in May 1939; 600 in June; 1,150 in July; and 200 in August.<sup>196</sup> The decline in applications in 1939 probably indicates that most Jews had already applied for aid or even left Vienna .

*Kristallnacht*, and the days before and after loom large in the memories of Viennese Jews who lived through this period. On November 7, 1938, George Clare read that Herschel Grynszpan had shot Ernst vom Rath. He was then sitting in a hotel

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<sup>195</sup> As extrapolated from the sample.

<sup>196</sup> These approximations are extrapolations from sampling the set of processed IKG files.

lounge in Berlin – by that time his family had already fled Vienna – and worrying that the shooting would have dire consequences for the Jews. On *Kristallnacht*, Nazis arrested and brutalized his uncles and young cousins in Vienna. Clare never understood how he personally escaped the violence.<sup>197</sup> Viennese Jew Edith Kurzweil observed uniformed SS men and ordinary Viennese people throwing pews and holy books from Vienna’s largest synagogue into the street as they shouted obscenities like *Saujuden* (Jewish pigs). They set fire to the synagogue, while onlookers stood idly by, she recalled.<sup>198</sup> Kurzweil’s vivid description of the incident indicates how terrified she was. She believed that because the state carried out the destruction alongside ordinary Austrian antisemites, Jews needed to flee the country.

Jews were so desperate to emigrate that they turned to illegal channels when the legal ones failed them. The Gestapo issued strict orders on December 23, 1938 preventing Jews from crossing into countries on its western border. Nevertheless, illegal border crossings continued into spring 1939.<sup>199</sup> Jews also demonstrated willingness to immigrate illegally to Palestine after the British limited Jewish immigration to Palestine in May 1939, joining or even organizing illegal transports there.<sup>200</sup> The IKG and the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem both warned that the British would deduct illegal immigrants from the official quota specified in the White Paper of May 1939, but SS and Gestapo leaders supported the illegal immigration.<sup>201</sup> After all, Nazi policy was expulsion and expropriation, and they did not care where the

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<sup>197</sup> Clare, 228.

<sup>198</sup> Edith Kurzweil, *Full Circle: A Memoir* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 7.

<sup>199</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 302-303.

<sup>200</sup> Rabinovici, 54.

<sup>201</sup> Rabinovici, 54.

Jews went or how they got there.

Meanwhile, the pool of prospective havens for Jewish refugees continued to shrink as countries refused to admit additional Jewish refugees. For example, in July 1939 the Wagner-Rogers Child Refugee Bill, which would have allowed 20,000 Jewish refugee children from Germany to enter the United States above the quota, died in committee in the Senate.<sup>202</sup> By spring 1939, enough people had applied to fill the United States' immigration quotas for Germany (including Austria) for four to six years.<sup>203</sup> Still, the Jewish community held out hope. Between *Kristallnacht* and the outbreak of war, 11% of Jewish applicants to the IKG specified Palestine, 16% specified the United States, and nearly 8% specified Shanghai as intended destinations. As before *Kristallnacht*, some also stated they were willing to go anywhere or left the section of their application with an intended destination blank. In the months between *Kristallnacht* and the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, daily life remained uncertain for Viennese Jews as mobs continued to attack Jewish pedestrians and loot their homes and businesses. Aryanization also continued; between March and September 1939, Nazis appropriated 5,572 Jewish homes in the city and gave them to "Aryans."<sup>204</sup> Despite these challenges, Jewish refugees were still able to emigrate as the Third Reich moved from annexation to war.

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<sup>202</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 299.

<sup>203</sup> David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), 37.

<sup>204</sup> Bukey, *Hitler's Austria*, 150.

## The Outbreak of World War II in Europe: September 1939

When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, approximately 240,000 Jews remained in the Reich, including 185,000 in Germany and 55,000 in Austria, including 11,000 children, 79,000 people aged 60 and older, 180,000 unemployed people, and 60,000 people dependent on welfare.<sup>205</sup> Emigration dwindled because most Jews who could obtain visas had already left and because of prior forced emigration policies. For Jews still in the *Altreich* and *Ostmark*, the outbreak of war did not bring immediate change in their daily lives. In Vienna, antisemitic mobs still rounded up Jews, and Jews were still deported to concentration camps.<sup>206</sup> Many Jews still fled elsewhere in Europe, eager to leave direct Nazi control and wait for visas outside the Reich. Between September 1939 and December 1940, 5,712 Viennese Jews emigrated to other European countries, and between January 1939 and December 1940, 3,253 Jews did so. In those years, half of all Jews chose a European destination.<sup>207</sup> Unfortunately, emigrating within Europe did not guarantee safety from the Nazi regime because they could still be captured and deported by the Nazis as the Third Reich expanded during World War II. Jewish refugees still fled to these countries in the hopes that in the meantime, they would receive U.S. visas.

Preoccupied with the war news and transports to concentration camps, the IKG processed fewer applications at the outbreak of the war than it had after either the *Anschluss* or *Kristallnacht*. Although emigration was still an option for Austrian Jews, most of those who had a chance of obtaining a visa had already done so. When

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<sup>205</sup> Cesarani, 278.

<sup>206</sup> Rabinovici, 88.

<sup>207</sup> Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 227.



the war began, multiyear visa waiting lists and restrictive emigration policies made escape very difficult. In September 1939, the IKG counted only 65,822 Jews in Vienna,<sup>208</sup> representing a reduction by 104,156 Jews since the *Anschluss* in March 1938 and less than 39% of the 169,978 Jews who lived in Vienna in before the *Anschluss*.<sup>209</sup>

Nevertheless, Nazi policy continued its destructive work on the lives and psyches of Viennese Jewry. Contributing to the overall terror in the Jewish community, between September 9 and 11, antisemitic mobs rounded up 1,408 Jewish men in Vienna who had Polish citizenship, primarily those under age 18 and over age 60. These boys and elderly men were detained for three weeks in a stadium and then deported to Buchenwald concentration camp; their ashes returned to Vienna in urns. Over two-thirds of the original 1,408 were murdered by early 1940, and only 27 of them lived to 1945.<sup>210</sup> This organized terror was a continuation of Nazi policy designed to horrify and force Jews out of the Reich, leaving their financial assets behind.

On October 16, 1939, Eichmann met with representatives of the Vienna Gestapo and Reich Commissioner of the *Ostmark*, Josef Bürckel. Bürckel ordered an accelerated schedule for transporting Jews from the *Ostmark* to planned camps near Kraków and Warsaw. In carrying out these orders, Eichmann concerned himself with seizing property left behind by fleeing Jews. Specifically, he considered measures to

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<sup>208</sup> Report of the Vienna Jewish Community, A/W 126, Reel 294, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>209</sup> Herbert Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung*, 13.

<sup>210</sup> Rabinovici, 88.

prevent Aryan mobs from seizing the property for themselves as they had done in the riots after the *Anschluss* and during *Kristallnacht*, thus ensuring that only the Reich would be enriched via the plundering of Jewish property. During this meeting, Adolf Eichmann, Karl Ebner of the Vienna Gestapo, and Dr. Becker of the Reich Commissioner's office planned two transports per week of 1,000 Jews each to Poland, starting that week.<sup>211</sup> These transports did not take place as planned, but rather on a more limited scale.

Eichmann ordered the IKG to produce lists of Jewish "émigrés," and announced the planned resettlement of Austrian Jews to a reservation in Nisko, in the Lublin District of Poland.<sup>212</sup> The Nisko Plan, an operation to expel Jews to occupied Poland in October 1939, was cancelled in early 1940. The Nisko plan fell apart for logistical reasons, including the fact that there were insufficient trains to take Viennese Jews to Poland.<sup>213</sup> The Nazis prioritized the German army's access to rail transport for extracting Polish POWs over the transporting Jews to Eichmann's proposed reservation.<sup>214</sup> On October 20, 1939, the first transport from Vienna departed Aspang Station for Nisko, where SS men forced Jews to surrender any of their belongings they had brought with them on the crowded train, and march five hours to an unfinished camp.<sup>215</sup> While the removal of 80,000 Jews did not take place as planned, the Nazis nevertheless removed a total of 4,700 Jews to Nisko; by the time the camp closed in April 1940, only 300 survived and were permitted to return

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<sup>211</sup> Safrian, 53.

<sup>212</sup> Safrian, 54.

<sup>213</sup> Safrian, 57.

<sup>214</sup> Cesarani, 259.

<sup>215</sup> Safrian, 55.

home.<sup>216</sup> Although the Nisko reservation was short-lived, the systematic transports demonstrated to the Nazis that they could rapidly round up and deport Jews into Poland for the purpose of making the Reich *judenrein*.

In the first few months of World War II, thousands of Viennese Jews sought immigration permits at foreign consulates and still applied to the IKG for financial aid. Most found themselves rejected at consulates or placed on multiyear visa waiting lists. In 1939 and the first half of 1940, the United States issued visas to fill its German immigration quota, but in 1941, the United States only filled 47% of its German quota because it wanted to restrict Jewish emigration.<sup>217</sup> Despite the fact that the British restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, Adolf Eichmann ordered that emigration to Palestine should continue, albeit with foreign exchange fees benefitting the Third Reich.<sup>218</sup> In the meantime, few Jews applied for financial aid to flee. In September 1939, the IKG processed hardly any applications for emigration aid, only approximately 100. One month later, in October 1939, the IKG processed so few questionnaires that there was only one questionnaire in my sample.<sup>219</sup>

The records themselves do not indicate the reasons for this dramatic drop in applications. At the time, the IKG still maintained a balance between the Nazi authorities, which demanded that the IKG supply lists of emigrants, and foreign aid committees which supplied the necessary funds for emigration.<sup>220</sup> Between 1939 and

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<sup>216</sup> Cesarani, 259-260.

<sup>217</sup> Feingold, 296.

<sup>218</sup> Rabinovici, 88.

<sup>219</sup> Emilie Eckstein Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.40, Reel 1063, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>220</sup> Offenberger, 156.

summer 1940, when the Nazi authorities forced the IKG to cease processing applications, the pattern of applications shifted. Rather than a dramatic increase in households applying for funding at specific pivotal moments, households applied in a low, steady stream. In general, the IKG processed between 50 and 150 applications per month until summer 1940. Still, as earlier, Viennese Jews who applied for assistance during the first months of the war in Europe lived all over the city and represented multiple economic classes.

The IKG, recognizing the necessity of attaining additional funds to support Jewish emigration, reached out to the international Jewish community for assistance. In August 1939, the IKG published a report in German, French, and English documenting its operations during the first sixteen months of the Nazi regime in Austria. The report was intended to persuade American and French Jewish organizations to help fund Austrian Jewish emigration.<sup>221</sup> According to the IKG's brochure "*Auswanderung – Umschichtung – Fürsorge*" (Emigration – Retraining – Welfare), only 72,000 Jews remained in Vienna as of July 1939.<sup>222</sup> By the end of that month, 104,000 Jews had emigrated, 41,500 with the financial assistance of the IKG via donations from international aid organizations.<sup>223</sup> Even though the IKG was unable to supply all applicants with direct financial aid, it provided emigrants with other means of support, such as assistance arranging their emigration documents, lodgings, and access to foreign currency. According to the report, 62,500 Viennese

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<sup>221</sup> Rabinovici, 63.

<sup>222</sup> Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, "Auswanderung Umschichtung Fürsorge - Emigration Retraining Social Care – Emigration Reclassement Assistance, April 2, 1938 – July 31, 1939," US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, RG-11.001M.0102, Fond 707, Opis 2, Folder 13, 2. German original.

<sup>223</sup> "Auswanderung Umschichtung Fürsorge," 3. German original.

Jews fled without the IKG's direct financial support.<sup>224</sup> The IKG reported that "...there is no doubt that emigration under these circumstances could not have happened if these Jewish organizations [the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Council for German Jewry, and HICEM] had not stood by the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien*."<sup>225</sup> By May 1939, 100,000 Austrian Jews had emigrated, more than 50% of former-Austria's pre-war Jewish population.<sup>226</sup>

The IKG Vienna continued to appeal to the international Jewish community for support to fund Jewish emigration from Austria. In 1940, the IKG produced an English-language report intended for an American and British audience, "Twelve questions about emigration from Vienna, January 1 – April 30, 1940." The report detailed the three primary duties of the IKG: "1. Promotion and direction of emigration 2. Supporting the people awaiting emigration 3. Care for the elderly as well as those out of consideration [ineligible] for emigration."<sup>227</sup> In this report, the IKG asserted that two thirds of Austrian Jews, including three quarters of those eligible for emigration, had emigrated in spite of closed borders.<sup>228</sup> The IKG estimated that, by the end of April 1940, between 20-25,000 Jews—including children, adolescents, and men with agricultural training—awaited an opportunity to emigrate. The IKG appealed to foreign aid organizations to reunite wives with their

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<sup>224</sup> Rabinovici, 63.

<sup>225</sup> "Auswanderung Umschichtung Fürsorge," 5. German original. HICEM was a merger of three Jewish migration associations: the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Jewish Colonization Association, and Emigdirect.

<sup>226</sup> Friedländer, Volume 1: *The Years of Persecution*, 245.

<sup>227</sup> Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, Vienna (Fond 707), RG-11.001M.27, US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Opis 2, folder 17, 7. German original.

<sup>228</sup> Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, "Twelve questions about emigration from Vienna, January 1 – April 30, 1940," US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, RG-11.001M.0102, Fond 707, Opis 2, Folder 18, 1.

husbands and parents with their children, arguing that tens of thousands of Jewish adults underwent agricultural and industrial training in order to make themselves fit for emigration.<sup>229</sup> The pamphlet was an emotional plea for funds, reminding Jews abroad that after September 1, 1939, the number of European countries available as a possible destination for refugees was even more limited than before Germany invaded Poland.<sup>230</sup>

Those Jews who remained in Vienna, barred as they were by Nazi regulations from participating in the economy, increasingly needed welfare assistance. In its appeal to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, HICEM, and other Jewish organizations outside the Third Reich, the IKG argued that it did not have the means to support the Jews in need. By 1940, the IKG estimated that approximately 117,000 Jews had emigrated from Austria since the *Anschluss*, and those who remained were mostly unemployed middle-aged and elderly adults.<sup>231</sup> The purpose of this English-language report in 1940, then, was to justify to Jewish organizations in the United States why they should continue sending funds to the IKG. Begging for assistance, the IKG detailed its efforts supporting emigration, professional retraining, social welfare, and foreign currency exchange services.

The demographic profile of the Jews remaining in Vienna in 1940, the IKG believed, still included Jews who were able and willing to emigrate. According to the report, only 50,385 Jews remained in Vienna on January 1, 1940. Of these, nearly

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<sup>229</sup> "Twelve questions," 1.

<sup>230</sup> "Twelve questions," 3.

<sup>231</sup> Report of the Vienna Jewish Community: A Description of the Activity of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien in the period from May 2-1938 – December 31, 1939, A/W 126, Reel 294, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem Component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 8.

half were women over age 20 (29,991).<sup>232</sup> In comparison, by summer 1940, there were still 72,327 Jews in Berlin. Of these, 25,000 (34.5%) were women and 16,000 (22%) were men between the ages of eighteen and sixty.<sup>233</sup> As in Berlin, Jewish women still in Vienna in 1940 outnumbered men and were generally older. In Vienna, women outnumbered men in all age brackets, but the distinction between men and women was most pronounced for Jews aged 40 and above, and especially over age 60. The remaining Jewish population consisted of 3,680 children and juveniles under age 20 (7%), 1,135 men aged 20 to 40 (2%), and 3,572 women aged 20 to 40 (7%), 6,678 men aged 40 to 60 (13%), and 13,597 women aged 40 to 60 (27%).<sup>234</sup> The IKG explicitly emphasized that these Jews were ready to emigrate. Specifically, the IKG noted that the children were “looking out for home and shelter,” that the adults between ages 20 and 40 were “able to settle and work abroad,” and that the adults aged 40 to 60 were “able to emigrate and to find a position without the help of their relatives and friends.”<sup>235</sup> In addition, 8,901 men over 60 (18%) and 12,822 women over 60 (25%) remained in Vienna who “must be cared for.”<sup>236</sup> In the case of Jews over 40, the IKG implied that they were less likely to emigrate and required welfare assistance in Vienna. These data and their visual representation in an age-sex pyramid were intended to persuade aid organizations like the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) that members of the Jewish community of Vienna were able to emigrate and required financial assistance.

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<sup>232</sup> “Twelve questions,” 3.

<sup>233</sup> Kaplan, 174.

<sup>234</sup> “Twelve questions,” 3.

<sup>235</sup> “Twelve questions,” 3.

<sup>236</sup> “Twelve questions,” 3.

The IKG summarized this report's findings in a final emotional appeal for aid, reminding Jews abroad of the dire situation in Vienna. The IKG pleaded in English, "HELP THE *ISRAELITISCHE KULTUSGEMEINDE WIEN* SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF EMIGRATION! CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMMIGRATION! OPEN THE DOORS OF PALESTINE! ... DO NOT DENY YOUR GENEROUS HELP!"<sup>237</sup> The combination of graphics and lengthy affirmations of the Jewish community's hopes, viability immigrants' overseas jobs, and need for financial aid demonstrate both the IKG's pride in its work as well as the tenacity and desperation of the Jewish community to flee Austria.

The questionnaires Viennese Jews submitted after the war broke out also provide insight into the needs of individual Jews. For instance, only a month after Germany invaded Poland, 54-year-old Emilie Eckstein appealed to the IKG to cover the remaining costs of her ship's passage to Palestine. Eckstein lived in the eighth district and had lived in Vienna for 31 years. Her file included a receipt from the Palestine Office indicating that she had already paid 400 Reichsmarks, presumably mostly for transportation, out of a total emigration cost of 693.10 Reichsmarks.<sup>238</sup> Eckstein evidently hoped that the IKG would help her cover the difference. Typically, the IKG and Palestine Office preferred to send younger Jews with specific job training to Palestine, and Emilie Eckstein's only listed skill was "*Haushalt*" (housework). Still, Eckstein stated that she had a valid passport. She also noted that

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<sup>237</sup> "Auswanderung – Umschichtung – Fürsorge," Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, Vienna (Fond 707), RG-11.001M.27, Opus 2, folder 13, 11. German original. Capitalization in the original.

<sup>238</sup> Emilie Eckstein Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.40, Reel 1063, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.



she had a daughter, Marie Pfeifer, in Haifa who would support her. A month later, 54-year-old Helene Sturm of Vienna's second district applied for financial aid to join her son Hans in New York.<sup>239</sup> Although she indicated that she was married on her questionnaire, she did not supply her husband's name, or information about him, or list him as a family member who would travel with her. Like Emilie Eckstein, Helene Sturm had no income and listed her only skill as housework. Both women intended to reunite with their children overseas and, lacking income of their own, relied on the IKG's financial assistance to fund their passage.

The IKG continued processing questionnaires well into summer 1940. Armand Löwy, a 28-year-old single man living in Vienna's first district, was born in Istanbul, and did not indicate in his questionnaire how long he had lived in Vienna.<sup>240</sup> He wanted to return to Prague, where he typically conducted business. He had no income or new career plans, but he listed a personal reference in Prague. Löwy's case is unusual because he was young. At that point, there were very few young Jews in Vienna. Even 49-year-old salesperson (*Kaufmann/Angestellter*) Julius Kron from Vienna's ninth district was slightly younger than most of the remaining Jewish population.<sup>241</sup> When he submitted his questionnaire in July 1940, he was unemployed, without any income, and he lacked funds for emigration. Instead of

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<sup>239</sup> Helene Sturm Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.242, Reel 430, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>240</sup> Armand Löwy Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.144, Reel 1136, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

<sup>241</sup> Julius Kron Emigration Questionnaire, A/W 2590.130, Reel 1125, Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna – Jerusalem component collection (2006.385, RG-17.017M), US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

indicating where he wanted to go, he merely noted the specific train he wanted to take to leave Vienna. Obviously, he just wanted to leave Vienna and would go anywhere. Both single, neither Löwy nor Kron listed any relatives on their questionnaires or supporting documents. The IKG also made the case to Jewish organizations in the United States for refugees like Löwy and Kron in terms of their valuable skills in commerce or their friends and relatives abroad.

Viennese Jews continued applying for aid as long as the IKG accepted applications, although the IKG itself faced increasing difficulties helping them. After mid-1941, it became impossible for Jews to emigrate anywhere. Most countries were either occupied by, or at war with Germany. Germany allowed Jewish emigration until 1941; from the start of World War II to October 1941, 71,000 Jews left the Third Reich including 20,000 Viennese Jews.<sup>242</sup> In the last months of 1939, 12,000 Viennese Jews emigrated, compared to 6,378 in 1940 and 1,194 between January and June of 1941.<sup>243</sup> As late as March 1940, the IKG corresponded with various consular officials and representatives of international aid organizations on behalf of Viennese Jews. The correspondence files of the IKG's Emigration Office include memos addressed to aid organizations in France, Holland, Germany, Italy, the United States, Hungary, and Switzerland stating the cases of individual applications.<sup>244</sup> The IKG answered inquiries about the status of loved ones whom emigres had left behind in Vienna. It sent direct inquiries about exit documents and sponsorships and attached

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<sup>242</sup> Offenberger, 195.

<sup>243</sup> Offenberger, 195.

<sup>244</sup> Gmina Żydowska Wiedeń (Sygn. 103), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Reel 2, part 9.

brief biographies of applicants seeking financial aid to persuade potential sponsors.<sup>245</sup>

The IKG still operated through 1940 and into 1941 but stopped processing emigration questionnaires between July and August of 1940. The end of questionnaire processing was likely a sign of the fact that the United States had stopped issuing visas to anyone still in the Reich and that most countries had closed their doors to Jewish refugees.<sup>246</sup> The IKG's records do not offer an additional explanation as to why the staff stopped processing the questionnaires in summer 1940. The United States still issued visas to German and Austrian Jews until summer 1941, but after mid-1940, increasingly only to German and Austrian Jews already out of the Reich. These Jews awaited their U.S. visas in France or other European countries.<sup>247</sup> Nevertheless, while the IKG still processed questionnaires the Jewish community still held out hope. Between the invasion of Poland and the time the IKG stopped processing applications for financial aid, 4% of applicants stated they would go anywhere, 12% specified Asia, 8% specified Latin America, 32% specified the United States, and 20% specified Palestine as their intended destinations; almost no one specified European countries or former English colonies. Although the IKG still operated in 1941, by fall 1941 Nazi policy towards the Jews had shifted to extermination. Before that point, Nazi policy was designed to force Jews to emigrate. When the Nazis decided to exterminate the Jews, however, emigration virtually ceased.

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<sup>245</sup> Gmina Żydowska Wiedeń (Sygn. 103), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Reel 2, part 10.

<sup>246</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Volume 2: *The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945* (New York: HarperPerennial, 2008), 86.

<sup>247</sup> Friedländer, Volume 2: *The Years of Extermination*, 84-86.

In 1940, the Nazis formulated several plans for sending Jews from the Reich to starve in ghettos in Poland which were not yet fully carried out. In October 1940, the Nazis identified occupied Poland as a labor center for the Reich.<sup>248</sup> In December 1940, Hitler ordered the deportations of 60,000 Jews from Vienna to the *Generalgouvernement* in Poland while the war was in progress.<sup>249</sup> Reinhard Heydrich developed *Nahplan 3* (Short-Range Plan 3), which stipulated the “evacuation” of 60,000 Jews, as well as gentile Poles, from Vienna to occupied Poland; he intended to expel more than 800,000 people, including a total of 10,000 people from Vienna and 240,000 people from ghettos in Poland alone before April 1941. Between February 15 and March 12, 1941, 5,000 Jews were deported to ghettos in Poland, where the SS deliberately starved them. In mid-1941, Löwenherz requested the return of these deportees and of the Jewish inmates at Buchenwald and Dachau so the prisoners could emigrate; *SS-Öbersturmführer* Alois Brunner summarily denied both requests.<sup>250</sup> In mid-1941, the Nazis still considered Jewish emigration, but at the end of 1941, Nazi policy shifted to mass extermination.<sup>251</sup>

Deportations to Theresienstadt and ghettos, the dissolution of the IKG, and the Nazi employment of their extermination policy in 1942 finally disheartened and dismantled the Jewish community in Vienna. The 46,000 Jews still in Vienna in winter 1941 received news of deportations to Theresienstadt, a transit and labor camp near Prague, as well as to ghettos in Poland, and lost hope of emigration or

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<sup>248</sup> Safrian, 68.

<sup>249</sup> Safrian, 68.

<sup>250</sup> Rabinovici, 102.

<sup>251</sup> Rabinovici, 103.

reunification with their loved ones.<sup>252</sup> In October 1942, two transports left for Theresienstadt carrying 1,500 IKG workers and their dependents, those who thought they were protected because of their employment with the IKG.<sup>253</sup> In 1942, Jews were sent from Theresienstadt to death camps. On November 23, 1942 the IKG became the Council of Jewish Elders in Vienna under strict control of German authorities. Like the IKG, the Council was still forced to obey and implement Nazi orders.<sup>254</sup> Desperate Viennese Jews could no longer flee the Reich.

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<sup>252</sup> Offenberger, 214.

<sup>253</sup> Offenberger, 263.

<sup>254</sup> Offenberger, 264.

## Conclusion: The Decimation of the Viennese Jewish Community

For most Viennese Jews, the *Anschluss* and *Kristallnacht* proved that their lives in Vienna were no longer feasible. Between in 1938 and 1940, when Nazi policies excluded Jews from public and economic life and encouraged Jewish emigration Viennese Jews sought every opportunity to flee, although the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 limited their options for emigration. Newly impoverished Viennese Jews turned to the IKG for financial aid to emigrate. The emigration questionnaires Viennese Jews submitted to the IKG reveal their desperation. Few Viennese Jews remained: perhaps some refused to leave, while most who did not emigrate probably could not obtain visas. By October 1941, when Nazis halted emigration from Austria, what remained of the Jewish community of Vienna consisted of IKG staff and volunteers, the elderly, and those who could not emigrate.<sup>255</sup> Through their individual stories on their questionnaires and supporting documents, Viennese Jews made the case to both the IKG and potential sponsors that they deserved financial aid. Forced emigration between 1938 and 1940 reduced Vienna's vibrant Jewish population by two thirds. Out of nearly 200,000 Austrian, primarily Viennese, Jews, 136,000 Viennese Jews emigrated by 1942.<sup>256</sup> The rest of the remaining Viennese Jews were murdered by the Nazis after 1942.<sup>257</sup>

In the period when the Nazis permitted the IKG to facilitate Jewish

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<sup>255</sup> Offenberger, 267.

<sup>256</sup> Offenberger, vii, 197. This figure of 136,000 Viennese Jews represents Jews from March 1938 through 1942, or two thirds of Viennese Jewry. In comparison, 75% of Jews from Vienna emigrated by October 1941.

<sup>257</sup> Offenberger, 263.

emigration, Jews turned to the IKG Emigration Office with varying degrees of success for assistance with financial aid. In general, applicants wanted to go anywhere, while some stated specific locations. Applicants sought out destinations like the United States, Shanghai, the Soviet Union, and Latin America.<sup>258</sup> Despite the British limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine, including blocking most legal immigration by limiting certificates, approximately 10,000 European Jews (including Jews from both Germany and Austria) reached Palestine between 1939 and 1940; at the same time, approximately 37,000 Jews reached the United States legally, 10,000 fled to other countries, and 20,000 arrived in Portugal or North Africa where they awaited visas and funds to continue their journeys.<sup>259</sup> Through the IKG's efforts, exactly 117,409 Jews fled Vienna and 51,501 of them (approximately a third) received financial support between May 1938 and December 1939.<sup>260</sup> According to the IKG, between May 1938 and December 1940, 123,490 Jews emigrated from Vienna, most to other countries in Europe (54,405 emigrants), 8,900 to Palestine, 28,012 to the United States, 11,294 to Central and South America, and 20,767 to Asia, Australia, and Africa. Many who fled elsewhere in Europe may have ultimately immigrated to Palestine, the United States, Latin America, Australia, or other destinations as well.

Although two-thirds of Austrian Jews fled, they did not all arrive to safety. Emigration presented Jews with a means of escaping the tyranny of the Nazi regime in Austria but did not necessarily ensure survival. Those who only managed to travel

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<sup>258</sup> Cesarani, 281.

<sup>259</sup> Cesarani, 281.

<sup>260</sup> Offenberger, 156-157.

as far as European countries later occupied by the Nazi regime did not ultimately escape genocide unless they obtained visas while they were beyond the Reich's borders. For example, although Edith Kurzweil escaped Vienna on a *Kindertransport* in 1938, her parents who had fled to France were ultimately deported to their deaths at Auschwitz in September 1942.<sup>261</sup> Of the 136,000 Jews who escaped Vienna, an estimated 15,000 only made it as far as another Nazi-occupied territory and were murdered by the Nazis.<sup>262</sup> The rapid expansion of the Reich through most of Europe meant that even those Jews who fled the *Ostmark* between 1938 and 1940 remained in danger.

Jewish applications for financial aid from the IKG reveal the human side of decision to flee Nazi Germany. Jews from all walks of life registered with the IKG, from merchants and members of the free professions to shopkeepers, students, and housewives. Often young daughters and mothers took on the traditional male roles of heads of household on behalf of their families. Single adults and parents applied on behalf of their immediate and extended families. While some Jews listed any possible marketable skill that might make them a candidate for emigration, others simply noted that they had no income, their relatives were imprisoned in concentration camps, and they were willing to travel anywhere in the world. They needed funds, usually for ship's passage but also because the Nazis had already expropriated their assets, barred them from work, and otherwise destroyed their livelihoods. Nazi regulations designed to expropriate Jewish wealth for the benefit of the Nazi party left

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<sup>261</sup> Kurzweil, 245.

<sup>262</sup> Offenberger, 208 n102.



the Jewish community devastated, even before the Nazis decided to exterminate the Jews. In the face of these hardships, the Jews of Vienna from all social classes turned to the IKG for assistance, demonstrating the havoc Nazi policies and violence wrought across the entire community.

Although the Gestapo and the *Zentralstelle* terrorized the IKG, the possibility of emigration kept hope alive for the Jewish community. In its final months of processing questionnaires in summer 1940, the IKG still processed approximately 2,400 emigration questionnaires – a significant reduction in number, but still enough to show that Jews were still desperately trying to emigrate and escape Nazi Germany. Between September 1939 and October 1941, approximately 20,000 Jews fled Vienna, primarily in the last months of 1939.<sup>263</sup> By 1940, Jews increasingly found themselves with limited options for safe haven.<sup>264</sup> The SS permitted the IKG to arrange emigration for members of the Jewish community, but by 1941 they also demanded that the IKG comply with large-scale deportations to German-occupied territories.<sup>265</sup> Forced Jewish emigration, informed by policies making life under the Nazi regime unbearable while permitting Jews to leave the Reich alive, ground to a halt at the end of 1941. In late 1941, in accordance with a policy shift from emigration to annihilation, the *Zentralstelle* forced the IKG to sort, copy, and alphabetize the lists of Viennese Jews who the Germans had selected for transport to concentration camps and ghettos.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Offenberger, 195.

<sup>264</sup> Friedländer, Volume 2: *The Years of Extermination*, 86.

<sup>265</sup> Offenberger, 247.

<sup>266</sup> Offenberger, 251.

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