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Stein Ugelvik Larsen
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16

CHRISTIAN FLECK AND ALBERT MÜLLER

FRONT-STAGE AND BACK-STAGE: THE PROBLEM OF MEASURING POST-NAZI ANTISEMITISM IN AUSTRIA[1]

... von Haus aus kannte ich keinen Hass gegen Juden[2] — Adolf Eichmann

Arenas of Antisemitism

In the more than four decades since the establishment of the Austrian Second Republic, there has been a regular succession of incidents in which a remark made by a public figure has brought about accusals of it being antisemitic. In many cases, however, this accusation has been disputed on the grounds that the remark in question was not *intended* to be antisemitic. Public controversy over the question of what is or is not to be regarded as antisemitic happens always in the Second Republic when such incidents occur. An analysis of post-Nazi antisemitism should therefore not only examine the antisemitic actions and attitudes but also the public debate over what constitutes antisemitism itself. Compared with the predominant model of research into antisemitism — mostly psychological theories which see antisemitism as being rooted in the personality system — this also has the advantage of the greater distance.[3]

[1] This text represents a condensed version of our article "Zum nachnazistischen Antisemitismus in Österreich", in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften*, 1992, no. 4, 481-514.

[2] "From my home I felt no hatred against Jews". Quoted by Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report of The Banality of Evil*, (New York, 1963).

[3] A good overview of the present state of international research into antisemitism is given by the series "Current Research on Antisemitism", ed. Herbert A. Strauss and Werner Bergmann (Berlin — New York, 1987ff); for the discussion of the definition of "antisemitism" see in particular the contributions to *The Persisting Question. Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Antisemitism*, ed. Helen Fein, Current Research

As even a brief examination shows, post-Nazi antisemitism in Austria[4] also differs from its forerunners in being more often expressed in symbolic form. Actions which directly discriminate against or harm persons have become rare. Attacks on Jews (and supposed Jews) have usually been "only" verbal; non-verbal and physical attacks have been directed chiefly against Jewish cemeteries and monuments — a desecration of symbols — whereas in the First Republic anti-Jewish riots, for instance at the universities, were regular occurrences. Before saying that behaviour and action as expression of prejudices have become more civilized, one should remember that the potential victims of *physical attacks* and *open discrimination* are simply not there.[5] An examination of the character of antisemitism in post-1945 Austria, and the possible changes in it, must start from the basis that because of the factual impossibility of face-to-face conflict,[6] those who seek to show their hostility towards Jews have had, and still have, no alternative but to resort to symbolic action.

The well-documented reluctance of Austrian politicians and other members of the social elite to urge Austrian-Jewish emigres to return, or even to not remove practical hindrances for them, is only of limited usefulness as an indicator of the extent of post-Nazi antisemitism. These events were confined to the early phase of the Second Republic and, like

on Antisemitism 1 (Berlin — New York, 1987) and *Error without Trial. Psychological Research on Antisemitism*, ed. Werner Bergmann, Current Research on Antisemitism 2 (Berlin — New York, 1988). See also the following collections: *Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur nach 1945*, ed. Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb (Opladen, 1990) and *Der Antisemitismus der Gegenwart*, ed. Herbert A. Strauss, Werner Bergmann and Christhard Hoffmann (Frankfurt — New York, 1990), and Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, *Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Ergebnisse des empirischen Forschung von 1946-1989* (Opladen 1991).

[4] See, most recently, Ruth Wodak et.al., *"Wir sind alle unschuldige Täter". Diskurshistorische Studien zum Nachkriegsantisemitismus* (Frankfurt/Main, 1990). Since this study was published after the present manuscript was completed, a critique of it — in our view very necessary — cannot be offered here.

[5] There are, however, recent reports from Vienna of recognizably Jewish passers-by having been subjected to attacks verging on the physical. Instances of physical injury inflicted in public places, in the immediate post-war period, are also documented. See for example Ruth Beckermann, *Unzugehörig. Österreich und die Juden nach 1945* (Vienna, 1989), p. 79.

[6] Jews probably make up less than 0.1 per cent of the population (see also below); only in Vienna is there a population large enough to be seen, though most of them have been assimilated and thus are hardly visible. The physical attacks mentioned were indeed directed against Jews who had only recently arrived or who were known to be Jews or recognizable as such.

the delaying tactics used in connection with the making of reparation payments, attracted little public attention and were, for practical reasons, not discussed in public.[7]

Together with the shift from physical attack to symbolic action, the articulation of antisemitism has also changed its arena, moving from the front stage of public policy to only semi-public arenas and private places. These may include the back benches of Parliament,[8] the lecture-rooms of smaller universities,[9] the offices of public bodies,[10] in restaurants and in private dwellings.[11] Explicitly antisemitic propaganda is also addressed only to a selected audience (by means of material delivered by post, circulars and closed private gatherings).

"On Front-stage"[12] there is no antisemitism — at least nothing of which all the protagonists would say "Yes, this is antisemitism". The fact that an apparently antisemitic utterance is made at the very margin of the public domain, verging on the territory of private life where the public has no right to intervene, affects the kind of reaction that is felt to be legitimate

7 See for example Robert Knight, *"Ich bin dafür, die Sache in die Länge zu ziehen". Die Wortprotokolle der österreichischen Bundesregierung von 1945-1952 über die Entschädigung der Juden* (Frankfurt, 1988) on the question of the reparation payments, and Julius Braunthal, *The Tragedy of Austria* (London, 1948), p. 121 and Adolf Sturmthal, *Zwei Leben. Erinnerungen eines sozialistischen Internationalisten zwischen Österreich und den USA* (Vienna, 1989) pp. 206ff. which cite instances of the survival of antisemitism among the political élite after the defeat of National Socialism.

8 See the affair of the Members of Parliament who attracted attention by their antisemitic utterances during a sitting of Parliament: John Bunzl, "Zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Österreich" in: John Bunzl and Bernd Marin, *Antisemitismus in Österreich. Sozialhistorische und soziologische Studien* (Innsbruck, 1983), pp. 9-88; this incident p. 68.

9 The well-known Borodajkewycz affair began at the comparatively small School of World Trade (Hochschule für Welthandel) in Vienna. See Heinz Fischer (ed.), *Einer im Vordergrund. Taras Boradajkewycz* (Vienna, 1966).

10 In the course of a parliamentary commission of inquiry it became known that documents kept by official bodies contained references to the fact that particular individuals were Jews. See ORF (Austrian television) — Inlandsreport, 1.3.1990.

11 One of the most recent example was a Carinthian local politician who told a journalist, who had planned to write about him as a successful young entrepreneur, that ovens again were being built for the Jews, but that Simon Wiesenthal would fit into the pipe-bowl of the head of the Carinthian provincial government. For a time the man defended himself by saying that this "joke" had been made in private company and not in public. See *profile* 2/90 and *trend* 1/90.

12 For this concept see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (New York, 1959); Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, (New York 1974), 123ff.

on such occasions. As we have pointed out, there is debate over whether the remark (or act, though for the reasons given above such actions are relatively rare) is in fact destined by general consensus as antisemitic. Here the argument regularly centres on whether the perpetrator spoke (or acted) with antisemitic *intentions*. Generally the "accusation" of antisemitism is successfully rebutted at this stage, so that a political and moral evaluation of the offending remark becomes unnecessary. X declares that he is not an antisemite, and therefore he cannot have made an antisemitic remark: this is the simple, and usually effective, message.[13] If the accusation of antisemitism (and there clearly is a consensus against antisemitism in principle) is not successfully rebutted at this stage of the debate, so that the remark in question is being said to be antisemitic, the reaction of the relevant section of the public is nevertheless rarely one of shame. It will more likely be tolerant, on the grounds that the speaker was trapped into making the remark, or that it just slipped out of him, or that it has been taken out of context, and other excuses of the kind. One is inclined to see the form of post-Nazi antisemitism described here as analogous to such things as slips of the tongue and habitual mistakes which may cause embarrassment.[14] The public reaction suggests at least this interpretation. Someone drops the expression "Jewish swine", and from the unfavourable reaction of those around him the speaker realises that he has created an embarrassing situation. It must be emphasized that, as with other embarrassing situations, it is not so much the utterance itself as the reaction of those present that causes discomfort to the speaker. The perpetrator and his company are embarrassed because the *situation* has become embarrassing.

This very simply insight — that what is regarded as inappropriate is not the (antisemitic) content but the fact that the unintended "message" was articulated in the wrong setting — makes it necessary to look more closely at two consequences of this perspective.

13 Paradoxically, it is acceptable in political rhetoric for the person who offends against the public moral code by an antisemitic utterance that he also forwards the case for his own defence and to acquit himself of the charge of being an antisemite: "I am not an antisemite, and therefore I do not say that this gentleman is a Jew", Franz Olah is reported to have said in an election speech in 1966. Quoted in *profile* 11/1990. See Wilhelm Svoboda, *Franz Olah. Eine Spurensicherung* (Vienna, 1990).

14 For a theoretical framework see the works of Goffman, esp. Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual. Essays on the Face-to-Face Behaviour*, (New York, 1967), also Erving Goffman, *Strategic Interaction* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 31ff. and Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia, 1983), esp. pp. 197ff.

Firstly, it implies that there are places and situations in which the identical (antisemitic) utterance would not be felt to be embarrassing (i.e. to cause public offence).[15] Presumably the wide domain of private life provides ample opportunity for post-war Austrians to make antisemitic remarks in an appropriate setting. However, one would have to be very naive (or be the victim of professional distortion) to believe that, because antisemitic utterances are regarded as legitimate if made in certain kinds of situation, this means that all or a quantifiable majority or minority of Austrians are, beneath the surface, incorrigible Nazis. Such a belief presupposes a wholly unrealistic view of the world. In the same way, National Socialism succeeded, if in nothing else, in making antisemitism socially unacceptable in Central Europe; but to assume from this that all knowledge and all sentiments of an antisemitic nature have vanished form the face of the earth would be as mindless as to suppose that because there is no evidence for the operation of the laws of astrology there can be no individuals who believe in that kind of nonsense.

Secondly, the fact that a large proportion of the post-war Austrian public tend to condemn antisemitism, at least in the abstract, does show that a change, which can surely be seen as a change to the better, has taken place in the perception of what is a politically and socially acceptable attitude. It is all too easy to overlook the fact that rejection of the accusation of antisemitism — the protest that "that was not antisemitic!" or "that was not intended to be anti-Jewish!" — does imply an acceptance that it is no longer possible in public to engage with (moral) impunity in anti-Jewish agitation. That Austrians not all agree on a valid yardstick by which to determine the level of antisemitism is hardly surprising. Similar disagreement occurs in other areas too where matters of judgement are involved. An obvious example is the question of the appropriate punishment for capital offenses.[16]

We may sum up as follows. A serious and objective observer should not be surprised to find that off the spotlight of public life there will be pockets of antisemitism. What is of more concern is the nature of public reactions of the antisemitic utterances which do crop up in all areas of public life.

[15] This statement is supported by occasional reports of instances where an outsider was able to penetrate an antisemitic subculture.

[16] Roughly speaking one person in two believes the death penalty should be appropriate. See Gunter Falk, "Die Verteilung der Moral in Österreich. Über Variationen, soziostrukturelle Determinanten moralisch-ideologischer Wertpräferenzen und über den angeblichen Autoritarismus der Arbeiterklasse", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 4 (1979), Heft 3-4, pp. 150-165.

The only reaction that can be regarded as historically and politically appropriate and compatible with the standards of civilized democracies is the rejection and condemnation of such utterances regardless of the intentions of the speaker and any other mitigating factors. Failure to maintain this level of public morality, while not in itself necessarily antisemitic, plays the cards into the hands of antisemitism: a collectively binding moral standard can only be attained if those who are to acquire it are shown where and how violation of public morals *begins* and which penalties are imposed on those who violate it.

Empirical Research and Prophecy

The foregoing is, in watered-down form, part of the socially accepted view of the position of antisemitism in post-war Austria. We should, however, also remember the widespread popular notion that antisemitism will prove to be a sort of generational phenomenon which will die out with those who first learned and later articulated it. This belief is clearly expressed in those few published collections of survey data which permit conclusions to be drawn about developments over a longer period. Thus, in 1946 46 percent still agreed with the view that the Jews should not return, but in 1973 only 21 percent agreed.[17] Such trends encouraged widespread confidence that there would be an absence of prejudice in the future. "The antisemitism of the Austrians, on the other hand, must be seen mainly as a *historical residue* with a strong tendency to persist ... About two-thirds of the population are *still* to a certain extent affected by it": so says the first demoscopic study of prejudice in Austria[18], although there are no data at all on the earlier extent of antisemitism on which to base a comparison.

[17] Bernd Marin, "Umfragebefunde zum Antisemitismus in Österreich 1946-1982", in John Bunzl and Bernd Marin, *Antisemitismus in Österreich. Sozialhistorische und soziologische Studien* (Innsbruck, 1983), pp. 225ff. (not pag.). The 1946 figure comes from a newspaper (Marin quotes *Der neue Weg. Jüdisches Organ*, no 29/30 (5 August 1946)), so that this can hardly count as a scientifically obtained piece of data; and in 1973 there was little reason for any intelligent person (and presumably there are some, even among antisemites) to be worried about the return of the Jews to Austria, which had not taken place and was not likely to take place, (indeed, of what Jews?). Taking this into consideration, the very fact that this statement by Marin of an alleged trend was published several times shows clearly that even opponents of antisemitism were for a long time influenced by the belief that it should be seen as a biological problem.

[18] Dieter Bichlbauer and Ernst Gehmacher, "Vorurteile in Österreich", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 24 (1972), 734-746, p. 737. Our italics.

Tacitly the authors — and later writers too[19] — subscribe to the wholly unfounded theory that in the period of National Socialism, and above all in that of the Holocaust, antisemitic *attitudes* were at their height. Against that it can be argued, at least since the publication of the books by Hilberg[20] and Arendt[21], that in the matter of the administratively organised murder of millions of Jews feelings and strong views were of little relevance. Explanations which focus on hierarchical organisation, a belief in authority firmly embedded in institutions, and the meticulous carrying out of delegated tasks, combined with partial responsibility and a partial morality, are more cogent. Despite some dismay at what was felt to be too high a level of antisemitic prejudice, Austrian researchers continued to echo the refrain of Bichlbauer and Gehmacher, that in "fifty years' time traces of antisemitism [would] remain only in those circles where today [1969] there is still intense and militant antisemitism", and the authors did not fail to add that this remnant would amount to "five to seven per cent"[22] of Austrians. As we shall see, this prediction represents a classic case of a self-fulfilling prophecy, unfortunately not in the sense that the attitudes of those questioned in future surveys were as predicted, but in the sense that the data obtained could be adjusted to accord with the deep-seated "wishes" of the researchers.

There is not as yet a large body of research into post-Nazi antisemitism in Austria. In the Federal Republic of Germany studies on the subject appeared in the early 1950s[23], and certainly from the time of the Eichmann trial onwards, if not before, there was widespread discussion combined with continuous production of empirical research[24]. In Austria,

[19] Thus for instance Ruth Wodak, "Sprache und Antisemitismus", *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Wissenschaft und Kunst* 43 (1988), H. 3,4, uses a scale representing degrees of prejudice in which the fifth and most extreme level is the extermination of the Jews in the Nazi period.

[20] Raoul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York, 1961).

[21] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on The Banality of Evil*, (New York, 1963).

[22] Bichlbauer and Gehmacher, op.cit., p. 738.

[23] For instance Friedrich Pollock, *Das Gruppenexperiment* (Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie 2) (Frankfurt, 1955).

[24] See the survey in Klaus-Henning Rosen, "Vorurteile im Verborgenen". Zum *Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik*. ed. Herbert A. Strauss and Norbert Kampe (Frankfurt/New York, 1985), pp. 256-279. See also Herbert A. Stallen, *Zum Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Konzepte, Methoden und Ergebnisse der empirischen Antisemitismusforschung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977); Alphons Silbermann, *Sind wir Antisemiten? Ausmass und Wirkung eines sozialen Vorurteils in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Cologne, 1982); Alphons Silbermann and Herbert A. Sallen, "Latenter Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland", *Kölner Zeitschrift fur Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 28 (1976), 706-723.

by contrast, empirical studies of antisemitism did not begin until the late 1960s. Before that — in the mid-Sixties — there was political discussion about it, sparked off by the case of Taras Borodajkewycz, a decidedly extreme right-wing historian who, after lengthy debate, was deprived of the right to teach.[25] The discussion focused chiefly on antisemitism directly associated with extreme right-wing views. It was a study group engaged in research into stereotyping that first paid attention to the common everyday antisemitism that coexisted with republican and democratic views and was necessarily linked to related extreme right-wing attitudes.[26] In the 1970s there followed other studies based on research surveys by various market research institutes.[27] In a study on the subject of "coming to terms with the past", which was especially concerned with the "authoritarian character" of professional élites, the survey included some items relating to anti-semitism.[28] The most comprehensive study has been attempted by Hilde

[25] See Heinz Fischer (ed.), *Einer im Vordergrund: Taras Borodajkewycz* (Vienna, 1966). See also Heinz Kienzl, "Der Österreicher und seine Schande", *Forum*, October 1966.

[26] Institut für empirische Sozialforschung (IFES), *Antisemitismus und Persönlichkeit. Forschungsbericht* (Vienna, 1970).

[27] Institut für empirische Sozialforschung (IFES), *Vorurteile in Österreich. Forschungsbericht* (Vienna, 1972). Institut für Markt- und Sozialanalysen (IMAS), *Die Meinung über Juden. Forschungsbericht* (Linz, 1973). The results of these surveys formed the basis for a number of articles: Bichlbauer and Gehmacher, op.cit.; Bernd T. Marin, "Antisemitismus ohne Antisemiten? Zum nachfaschistischen Antisemitismus on Österreich" in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 1 (1976), 1-14; Bernd T. Marin, "Antisemitismus unter Arbeitern? Einige Daten und Thesen zum "Klassencharakter" des nachfaschistischen Antisemitismus in Österreich" in *Bewegung und Klasse. Studien zur österreichischen Arbeitergeschichte*, ed. Gerhard Botz et.al. (Vienna, 1978), 765-790; Bernd Marin, "Antisemitism before and after the Holocaust: The Austrian Case", in *Jews, Antisemitism and Culture in Vienna*, ed. Ivar Oxaal, Michael Pollak and Gerhard Botz (London/New York, 1987), 216-233. This article summarizes Marin's earlier positions once more, as does Bernd Marin, "Eine historisch neuartiger "Antisemitismus" ohne Antisemiten?", in *Eine zerstörte Kultur. Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus in Wien seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gerhard Botz, Ivar Oxaal und Michael Pollak (Buchloe, 1990), 325-348. An overview is also given by John Bunzl and Bernd Marin, *Antisemitismus in Österreich. Sozialhistorische und sociologische Studien* (Innsbruck, 1983), in which earlier studies by Marin are reprinted.

[28] Institut für empirische Sozialforschung (IFES), *Vergangenheitsbewältigung oder wie autortär ist der Österreicher. Ein empirischer Bericht* (Vienna, 1978).

Weiss.[29] It was based on a written questionnaire (1976) and on an oral interview conducted in 1980.

The not wholly unjustified concern that Austria's image had been damaged by Waldheim's presidential election campaign led to a further increase in empirical study of antisemitism in Austria.[30] For some years the Viennese "Institut für Konfliktforschung" has been conducting annual telephone surveys on this subject.[31]

The Waldheim Election Campaign

"Im Prinzip habe ich gegen die Juden nie etwas gehabt. Wir hatten ja immer jüdische Freunde." Thomas Bernhard[32]

Confidence in a future free from prejudice was profoundly shaken by the events surrounding Kurt Waldheim's candidacy and the election as Austrian Federal President in 1986. As this controversy was well covered by the international media, we do not need to describe in detail. We want to draw attention to the point that the Waldheim conflict perfectly illustrates the importance in political analysis to conflicts over the definition of a situation. In the beginning the aim of the strategists in the Waldheim campaign was to present him as the man whom "the world trusts": on the posters Kurt Waldheim stood smiling in front of a New York-style skyline. The attempt to achieve a bandwagon effect by this emphasis on cosmopolitanism has to be seen against the background of Austrian internal politics: Bruno Kreisky, who had worked hard to raise Austria's international political standing, had recently withdrawn as Chancellor, and

29 Hilde Weiss, *Antisemitische Vorurteile in Österreich. Theoretische und empirische Analysen* (sociologica 1), 2nd ed. (Vienna, 1987). See also Hilde Weiss, "Antisemitismus. Inhalte und Ausmass antijüdischer Einstellungen in der Wiener Bevölkerung", Parts 1 and 2, *Journal für angewandte Sozialforschung* 17 (1977), H. 3, 4; and 18 (1978), H. 1.

30 See Fritz Karmasin and Maximilian Gottschlich, *Antisemitische Einstellungen in der österreichischen Bevölkerung* (Vienna, 1986), and the study, conducted by Heinz Kienzl and Ernst Gehmacher, discussed below.

31 See Christian Haerpfer, "Antisemitische Einstellungen in der östereichischen Gesellschaft in der Periode 1973-1989" in *NS-Ideologie und Antisemitismus in Österreich*, ed. Heinz Kienzl and Kurt Prokop (Schriftenreihe der Liga der Freunde des Judentums 1) (Vienna, 1989), 35-45. In this study Haerpfer is able to use data from 1973 and 1985-1989. A 1990 study by the Institut für Konfliktforschung is to be published.

32 Thomas Bernhard, *Vor dem Ruhestand. Eine Komödie von deutscher Seele*, (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), 82.

neither his successor nor the SPÖ's presidential candidate could claim world reputation .

Opponents against Waldheim acted on the recognition (which was correct in terms of election tactics) that a victory over Waldheim could be achieved only if, firstly, the symbolic (and *only* symbolic) advantage which Waldheim enjoyed as the man trusted by the world could be undermined and, secondly, that the attack should come not directly from his political opponents but from a neutral seemingly disinterested source. They therefore passed material discrediting him to the World Jewish Congress, not realising what forces they then were unleashing.[33] The unintended consequence of this inept act was a massive increase in chauvinism and, linked with it, an antisemitic rhetoric among Waldheim's supporters.[34] From one day to the next his election propaganda[35] switched from cosmopolitanism to localism with the new slogan: "Wir wählen, wen wir wollen" ("We choose whom we want").

Without entering into further details, we will draw attention to just two other aspects. Firstly, some of Waldheim's opponents attempted to act as though one could possibly conduct an "objective" discussion of the involvement of Austrians in National Socialism. The accusation of having been a supporter of the NSDAP or of having associated with the Nazis in some way or other has always been used as arguments to further some other end.[36] Secondly, it must be stressed that because presidential candidates are not sufficiently distinctive in terms of programme, background or ideology, presidential elections tend to be fought very much

33 It is pure speculation, but the possibility cannot be dismissed that those involved in these activities thought that in post-war Austrian society antisemitism had no other role than that, previously mentioned, of a biological remnant and that it was confined to circles which could be ruled out as potential voters for the socialist candidate.

34 On the role played by the Austrian press see, most recently, Wodak et.al.

35 This "U-turn" in the campaign strategy can be seen with the utmost clarity if one compares two election leaflets that were distributed to Austrian households with a gap of only a few weeks between them. (1) *Portrait. Initiative Dr Kurt Waldheim*, Nr. 2/1986 presents the candidate as a sophisticated top-ranking politician and elder statesman. The content of (2) *Die Verleumdungskampagne. So wollten sie Kurt Waldheim fertigmachen!* (The libel campaign. This is how they tried to finish Kurt Waldheim!) (=Plus Nr. 4/1986) is such that it may truly be seen as a document of provincial conspiracy theories.

36 In this context it is especially revealing that Waldheim's predecessor as President, Rudolf Kirchschläger, was accused, also during an election campaign, of dubious military activities at the end of the war. This attack, based on sound documentation, appeared in the Austrian news magazine *Profil* and had no consequences of any kind.

on the basis of personalities and a candidate therefore needs to be given a symbolic identity.[37]

The Waldheim campaign not only brought Austria into the headlines of the world press but also intensified the conflict within Austria as to what constituted antisemitism. Where there before had only been political episodes — single, isolated antisemitic remarks unconnected with major issues, or flirtations, of a very inexplicit kind, with the attitudes of an electorate educated in antisemitism[38] — by now, for weeks and months antisemitism was a prime focus of political conflict. Once again it was clear that there was an implicit consensus condemning antisemitism both as an ideology and as a syndrome of attitudes, and that the only question at issue was what should be seen as constituting antisemitism itself.

Indignant rejections by individuals on the accusation of antisemitism, which they regarded as a slur, did on occasions assume forms that are nothing short of grotesque. A provincial politician who in a letter to Edgar Bronfman, President of the World Jewish Congress, expressed himself in long-established antisemitic clichés declared with the utmost conviction that he could not possibly be an antisemite, since he had some Jewish friends. Similarly, a well-known columnist who persistently railed against the interference of certain circles abroad, tried to refute the accusation of antisemitism by insisting that he had always abhorred Hitler's war.[39] These and many other similar statements had their spokesmen, but they were clearly in a minority. The majority — and those, moreover, who helped to mould and give expression to the collective consciousness — tolerated such discriminatory attacks and verbal insults.

[37] Thus Waldheim's election strategists, if they were prepared to let their actions be governed solely by the aim of securing victory for their candidate, were practically obliged to seize the chance of winning on a wave of sentiment that was partly antisemitic — assuming that they were not, like their opponents, deceived by their own hopes into thinking that antisemitism no longer existed.

[38] For instance in the parliamentary election campaign of 1970, when the main ÖVP candidate, Josef Klaus, was extolled as a "true Austrian", obviously in order to establish a contrast in the minds of the electorate in this respect between him and his opponent Bruno Kreisky.

[39] Josef Haslinger, *Politik der Gefühle. Ein Essay über Österreich* (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1987), p. 34, suspects, no doubt rightly, that "it is probably uniquely characteristic of Viennese antisemitism that it always defends itself by pointing to some Jewish friends or fellow-citizens".

The Limits of the Antisemitic Consensus

"Nun wohnte im Nachbardorf ein hartherziger Bauer, der schon sechs Juden mit eigenener Hand erschlagen oder erwürgt hatte und es dadurch zu beträchtlichen Gütern im Bärental gebracht hatte". Werner Kofler[40]

Another incident which took place in the context of the Waldheim controversy demonstrated just where the political and moral consciousness of the Austrians at the present time drew the limit with regard to antisemitism, in other words at what point an utterance was no longer excused but had to be penalised. When the acting General Secretary of the ÖVP, Michael Graff was asked what would make Waldheim a war criminal in his eyes and render Waldheim's withdrawal inevitable, he replied, "If he personally strangled six Jews". He was consequently forced to give up his own post. This episode enables us to gauge what the Austrian sees as no longer compatible with his own perception of himself — what kind of verbal *faux pas* will not be excused. The manner of killing referred to by the politician, who was speaking figuratively, is significant: it is the kind of deed for which, in the common-sense view, the perpetrator bears very definite personal responsibility; moreover, among such "personal" crimes this one is especially repellent (as compared, say, to shooting). Waldheim as a strangler of Jews would indeed find no consensus of acceptance, and anyone who even speaks of such a thing — even with the intention of defending Waldheim — must go. A further point about that type of crime is that it leaves no room for the usual excuses: the duty of obey orders, the special circumstances of warfare, a low position in the hierarchy of the machinery of death under the Nazi system, or ignorance of the ultimate result of an isolated action within a long chain of actions.[41]

Although in the interview in which that remark was made the interviewee was asked to name a deed which in his view would brand Waldheim a war criminal, he blurred the distinction between war and extermination of the Jews and referred to a kind of action which is

[40] *Now there lived in the neighbouring village a hard-hearted farmer who had already struck down or strangled six Jews with his own hands and by so doing had acquired a considerable amount of property in the Bärental.* Werner Kofler, *Hotel Mordschein, Drei Prosastücke* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1989), p. 121.

[41] Waldheim and his defenders used such explanations, in particular the image of the tiny cogwheel within an immense apparatus which the little lance-corporal could not possibly comprehend in its entirety, to make his involvement in the Nazi system appear to be nothing out of the ordinary.

characteristic neither of war crimes nor of the Holocaust. Significantly, "the personal murder of Jews" is the only type of act that in the Second Republic has led to criminal convictions for Nazi crimes. Actions which were more serious in terms of their contribution to "administrative massacre" (Arendt) but which lacked the element of personal involvement, of "getting your hands dirty" as the saying goes, regularly led in Austria to acquittals or to ludicrously light sentences.[42]

Many intellectuals also intervened in the Waldheim controversy, but it was all too clear that their morally rigorous attitude remained confined to a minority. Their attempts to use this affair as the starting-point for a moral renewal of Austria ended with the old fronts becoming even more firmly established. As far as antisemitism was concerned, the Waldheim controversy showed that while the Austrians do not want to be antisemites, they only recognize antisemitism when present at a fairly high level. Thus one can hardly claim that the affair led to increased sensitivity on the part of the public; it certainly helped, on the contrary, to reawaken dormant residues of antisemitism, to dust off the old familiar stereotypes and to add some new ones: in functionalist terms, it reinforced the antisemitic collective mentality, by means of the joint recital of its content, as a body if everyday knowledge that was alive and could still be used. In the forefront of political debate, antisemitic remarks were made on the spur of the moment and the public, while not exactly applauding them, accepted them with a chuckle. At a stroke, something that had been banished to the private sphere for more than four decades came out into the open and could be publicly discussed, probably for the first time. It became apparent that the social acceptability of antisemitism was felt to be a threatening situation. Antisemitism was something that people again could readily have recourse to as a body of shared knowledge about who was really behind the threatening evil at various times. It provided an explanation, and in using it people had a sense of understanding one another.

The Measuring of Antisemitism

Less than six months after this resurgence of a discussion that had seemed to have been consigned to oblivion, Austrian opinion researchers made another study of "antisemitism in Austria". It is interesting to look at the

[42] See for instance Simon Wiesenthal, *Doch die Mörder leben* (Munich, 1967). However, Wiesenthal also cites a number of cases where individuals had indeed personally "got their hands dirty". This fact was obvious, and yet they were acquitted by the courts.

results obtained by those who, less than twenty years earlier, had predicted that antisemitism would gradually die out over the next fifty years.

A study entitled *Antisemitismus in Österreich. Eine Studie der österreichischen demoskopischen Institute*, was published in 1987. It aimed to shed light on the question of antisemitism in Austria by using the techniques of the opinion survey. The survey was carried out, under the direction of Heinz Kienzl and Ernst Gehmacher, by IFES, Fessel & GFK, IFG, GALLUP and IMAS.

This is probably the largest study undertaken on this specific theme in terms of the number of people interviewed, but not in terms of the range of questions used.

As a first impression of the findings of this research project, and as a proof of how the researchers wished them to be understood, we quote at some length from a passage in the study used as a press handout on the public presentation of the study:[43]

> ... the actual strength of antisemitism in Austria has now been accurately and reliably established ...
>
> The result is clear. Altogether 7 percent of Austrians have definite feelings of antipathy towards the Jews in Austria. In addition, about a third of the population harbours certain negative stereotypes and unfavourable prejudices which are not, however, combined with hostility towards Jews. Such antisemitic modes of thought and of speech are far less common among more educated and younger people ...
>
> Austrian does, it is true, emerge fairly well from this: in only a few peaceful and small democracies is there less xenophobia (*Fremdenfeindlichkeit*) than in Austria. And antisemitism is gradually declining, there is no sign of a new resurgence...

As this quotation shows, the study arrived at a definite figure (7 percent of Austrians have definite feelings of antipathy ...") and also "evaluated" this

[43] *Antisemitismus in Österreich. Eine Studie der österreichischen demoskopischen Institute*, carried out by the following institutes: IFES, Fessel & GFK, IFG, GALLUP, IMAS, under the direction of Heinz Kienzl and Ernst Gahmacher (Vienna, 1989), unpublished manuscript, 59 pp. Quotations from p. 3. Pp. 3f. are identical with a press handout distributed at the "Antisemitismus-Enquete der österreichischen demoskopischen Institute" on 16 March 1987. The data obtained in this study are held in the Viennese data archive WISDOM. The following findings are result of a secondary analysis.

finding in a way which suggests that the data showed that antisemitism in Austria was a socially relatively harmless phenomenon.

In the measurement of antisemitism, however, not only the quality of the instrument of measurement used[44] but above all the definition of antisemitism is a decisive factor. In the literature[45] it has to a certain extent become customary to isolate the "non-prejudiced" group and to attribute the rest to differing degrees of prejudice ranging from very strong to slight.[46]

No. of items	6		7		8	
Positive responses	%	Cum. %	%	Cum. %	%	Cum. %
8					0	0
7			0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5
6	0.6	0.6	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.8
5	1.7	2.2	2.2	3.6	2.4	4.3
4	2.9	5.1	3.7	7.3	4.0	8.3
3	5.3	10.3	7.1	14.4	7.5	15.8
2	10.0	20.4	11.6	26.1	12.0	27.9
1	18.2	38.6	26.2	52.3	27.0	54.8
0	61.4	100.0	47.7	100.0	45.2	100.0

N = 2165

The result is clearly influenced not only by the content of the items but also by the number of items used. The proportion of responses revealing antisemitic attitudes will inevitably be higher when there are, say, 21 items — as in the study by Weiss — than when there are only six as in the 1987 study.[47]

[44] For details see Fleck and Müller, *Zum nachnazistischen Antisemitismus*, (see note 1).

[45] See note 2.

[46] See for instance Weiss, *Antisemitische Vorurteile*, p. 53, or Sallen, op.cit. (see n. 23).

[47] "Taken all in all, have Austrian Jews more good qualities than other Austrians, more bad qualities, or are they like other Austrians?" (answer: more good qualities, more bad qualities, like the others, don't know). — "Have the Jews a good or bad influence on culture?" (answer: good, bad, indeterminate, don't know). — "One should make sure that Jews do not occupy an influential position in our country" (answer: [tend to] agree, [tend to] disagree, don't know/no answer). — "It would be better for Austria if there were no Jews in the country" (answer: [tend to] disagree, don't know/no answer). — "If you get to know someone and discover that he is of Jewish descent, do you continue the acquaintance or do you draw back?" (answer: continue the acquaintance [it makes no difference], draw back, don't know). — "And are your own feelings towards the Jews on the whole friendly ("eher freundlich"), on the whole unfriendly or indifferent?" (answer: on the whole friendly, on the whole unfriendly, indifferent, don't know).

This is illustrated by the following example, in which further indicators have been added to the six. As a first step, levels 8 and 9 of antipathy towards "Jews" were used as an indicator; as a second step disagreement with the statement "We should not allow Jews in Austria to be discriminated against or insulted" was added.

It is surprising to see how sharply the number of potential non-antisemites decrease as the number of items is increased. But even though this shows that figures for the incidence of antisemitism to a certain extent can be manipulated upwards or downwards[48] the fact remains that they cannot be made to equal the level claimed by Weiss. There are clearly several reasons for this.

One is, without doubt, Weiss's chosen method of conducting her survey (anonymous, written answers). Weiss's own justification for this choice is the hypothesis that under the cover of complete anonymity people are more likely to express antisemitic views. It can certainly be assumed that in a face-to-face interview there is a tendency to exhibit "socially desirable" behaviour, which, as we have argued above, would mean *not* showing oneself to be an antisemite. A side-effect of Weiss's method was that only about half of the questionnaires sent out were returned completed (a perfectly respectable proportion), and that among these the number of refusals to answer was minimal, whereas in the 1987 survey it was considerable.

A second reason may well be the fact that the items in Weiss indicating milder degrees of antisemitism — the ones, therefore, which obtained the highest number of antisemitic reactions — were not included in the 1987 survey.

It is therefore not possible or legitimate to make a direct comparison between the *results* of the two studies. *Individual items*, however, may be (cautiously) compared.

On the question of Jews in "influential" positions, for instance, the following data were published:[49]

[48] As has evidently happened in this study.

[49] Haerpfer's study (1989) is also based on the comparison of items which can be traced over a period of years.

Study	Agree	Tend to agree	Agreement total	Disagree	No response
Weiss 1976[50]	22.1 %	22.7 %	44.8 %	55.2 %	
Weiss 1980[51]			18.4 %	61.1 %	20.5 %
1987 study[52]		23.5 %	23.5 %	49.2 %	27.3 %

Certain Knowledge

The structure of everyday common knowledge is such that if it is to be communicated convincingly to others, the speaker — and this also applies, for instance, to someone questioned in a survey — needs to stress that he has a certain amount of personal, "empirical" knowledge of the matter. Obtaining such empirical knowledge relating to "Jews" in Austria is likely to be somewhat difficult for most Austrians in view of the comparatively small Jewish population (and its relative concentration in Vienna).[53]

Those parts of the questionnaire which deal with the interviewees' contacts with Jews are therefore also of great interest.[54]

Another calculation shows that 11.6 percent claim to have contact at present with Jews in at least one of three categories. Even at a very generous estimate of the size of the "Jewish" group, to assume that the data obtained on this item truly reflect social reality would mean that the members of that group have on average a number of social contacts

[50] "Steps should be taken in good time to ensure that not too many Jews occupy the most influential positions in our country."

[51] "Should the access of Jews to influential professions be controlled and numerically limited, or should nothing of the kind be done?" (answer: control/limit, nothing of the kind, no answer).

[52] "One should make sure that Jews do not occupy an influential position in our country" (answer: [tend to] agree, [tend to] disagree, don't know/no answer).

[53] See, most recently, Friederike Wilder-Okladek, "Die jüdische Bevölkerung Wiens nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg", in *Der Pogrom 1938. Judenverfolgung in Österreich und Deutschland*, ed. Kurt Schmid and Robert Streibel (Vienna, 1990), pp. 101-108.

[54] "Do you yourself have contact with Jews at present?" (CONTINUE:) "among your relatives", "in your circle of acquaintances", "at your place of work" (answer: yes, no, don't know).

(mainly in their circle of acquaintance) that is not credible. That more than a third of those who claim to have contact with Jews at the present time showed antisemitic reactions in terms of the six items cited shows once again the eccentricity of this piece of data.[55]

	Contact with Jews					
	Among relatives		Among acquaintance		At place of work	
Yes	83	1.9	440	9.9	156	3.5
No	3958	89.3	3508	79.1	3431	77.4
Don't know	346	7.8	446	10.1	563	12.7
No response	47	1.1	40	.9	284	6.4
Total	4434	100.0	4434	100.0	4434	100.0

In addition to criticising aspects of the method of the study, one must also ask how it is that a heated public debate in which innumerable antisemitic utterances were made apparently had no effect on the climate of opinion. We would put forward the suggestion that antisemitism is not so much, or not only, a matter of attitudes and prejudices, although these are influenced by it, but it should rather be regarded as a reservoir of socially accepted knowledge with which every Austrian is familiar. In order to learn what Jews are, how to recognise them, to what kinds of actions they are predisposed and what opinion one should have of them, one needs only to grow up in this society. This knowledge is expressed in phrases which are part of everyday life. That some place is "as noisy as a Jewish school", that one must, or need not, "act with Jewish haste", that one should "not haggle like a Jew", are understood by anyone who has grown

[55] Not only do some of the people questioned give strange information, such aberrations can also be found in scientific texts. Marin tells of a survey (IMAS, 1973) in which 3 % of those questioned claimed to be of "Jewish descent" or to have "Jewish relatives". Marin sees this finding as grounds for revising upwards the officially documented proportion of Jews in the population. He attributes the difference to the effect of a "hostile environment" on the Jews' self-image, sense of identity and willingness to become assimilated; but it is probably more appropriate to see it as an expression of pro-Jewish wishful thinking — which is one of the ways in which people "cope with" the problem of antisemitism. Marin, in: Botz and Oxaal, p. 285, no. 9; also in German in Marin and Bunzl, most recently in Marin (1990), p. 405, n. 9.

up here even if he has never set eyes on a Jew. Cruder images relating to smell, potency, intellect, etc. can be fitted without difficulty into this framework of certain knowledge about the Jews. True, Austrians learn at the same time that it is wiser not to expose this body of knowledge to a wider audience (which may after all include some Jews, who, with their intellect, influential contacts and so on, may react unpleasantly). And they know, too, that something happened to the Jews "at the time" ("bis zur Vergasung" – to the point of being killed by gassing – is an expression commonly used to convey that something is being taken to extremes, is too difficult and beyond one's powers) but not that what happened was murder. Post-Nazi antisemitism is made up of this core of certainty, the expression of which is modified by the more diffuse body of knowledge concerning the extermination of Jews in the Holocaust.

Against this background the question of what antisemitism constitutes – and how it can be measured – ceases to be of much importance. The "antisemitic" label may be used in political rhetoric, but anyone who tries to discredit someone due to an antisemitic remark will find that there is a wide gulf between the use of an expression that appears to be antisemitic and the collective condemnation by the society of such a way of speaking. It is one thing to define antisemitism within the social scientist's frame of reference, but quite another to describe and explain what kinds of utterances with antisemitic overtones are permitted in a given political culture, and when, where and how public morality, or the "moral entrepreneurs"[56] acting in its name, take punitive action. From the social-theoretical and political points of view it is more important to devote attention to the latter area, since the much-favoured search for authoritarian characters yields little insight into the social dynamics of non-verbal and verbal attacks which have consequences for their perpetrators. Rather than measuring the "distribution" of moral attitudes (about which interviewees, aware of what is considered to be socially desirable, may in any case not be wholly truthful), one learns more about the character of a collective consciousness from the way in which it manifests itself.

[56] Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders*, New York 1963.

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