

In Touch

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE
JEWISH MUSEUM HOHENEMS, INC.

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Letter from the President

TIMOTHY L. HANFORD

Dear Friends and Supporters of AFJMH:

It is my pleasure to share this special year-end newsletter with you. As you will see from the articles in the newsletter, this has been another remarkable year for the Jewish Museum Hohenems.

Museum Director Hanno Loewy tells us in this issue about the continuing contributions he and his team have made to expanding research into, and knowledge of, Hohenems Jewish history. Please read on for some of the upcoming museum educational opportunities that Hanno shares with us including: the "All About Tel Aviv" exhibit and drama education tours.

I hope you will enjoy as much as I did Marjorie Perloff's absorbing "Class of 1938" memoir. I also recommend watching Marjorie's interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECaADwIBVXo>

For those of us fortunate enough to attend the 2017 Descendants Reunion celebrating the 400th anniversary of Jewish presence in Hohenems, the Museum's publication of a wonderful bilingual retrospective newspaper will serve as a welcome souvenir (http://www.jm-hohenems.at/static/uploads/2018/10/jmh_alte-freiheiten-von-ems_2018_RZ3.pdf). For those who didn't attend, we can hope that the newspaper will entice you into coming to the next reunion. A little while ago, I was missing Hohenems, so I decided to go on a tour from my desk <https://tinyurl.com/y8al9ujq>.

I am pleased to report that the AFJMH has served as an example for American friends organizations supporting other Jewish museums. Imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery.

As you are no doubt aware, the mission of the AFJMH is to provide additional financial support for the Jewish Museum Hohenems. The AFJMH also provides financial assistance for maintaining the Hohenems Jewish Cemetery. Your support for the museum's exhibitions, its publications, its research, and its events is absolutely indispensable. Accordingly, I would like to encourage you to continue your financial support.

The AFJMH is proud to have so many American Hohenems descendants as members. But we are always pleased to welcome more! Please send a note your siblings and cousins and urge them to take a look at the AFJMH website (www.AFJMH.org) and consider joining AFJMH.

I also want to take this opportunity to extend our best wishes to all for another productive year in 2019. Your past generosity to AFJMH is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,
Tim Hanford
President



News from the Museum

DR. HANNO LOEWY

Dear Friends of the Jewish Museum,

I am writing this in difficult times. Not for the Museum, our visitors come in numbers we never would have thought of ten years ago.

But the times of nationalism and hatred, resentment against “others” and discrimination we thought to be history in our part of the world seem to be looming back on both sides of the Atlantic and in Austria as well.

For the museum that means increasing responsibility and a growing sensitivity to the fact that our standards of democracy, a decent life together and the rights of minorities are fragile.

As we have done since 1991, the museum takes part in various activities to foster understanding and collaboration beyond borders and barriers of nations, ethnic groups or religions. On November 10, 2018 we took part in the “European Balcony Project.” Thousands of Europeans in various countries, came together in more than 150 cities to attend the “official” inauguration of the European Republic and the declamation of the European Manifest, written by the Austrian writer Robert Menasse and internationally renowned sociologist Ulrike Guérot. Hundreds of guests came to the museum and 8 young people from Vorarlberg, born in several countries from Austria to Gambia, read the manifesto in seven languages and we all sang the European Anthem “Ode to Joy” by Beethoven.

At the same time the museum has to reflect on its future. Together with the city of Hohenems and the State of Vorarlberg we are now organizing a student’s project with the architecture department of the University of Liechtenstein. Fifteen young students will explore the Museum and its



European Balcony Project. Jewish Museum Hohenems, Photo: Jacob Feuerstein

vicinity in order to develop ideas for the urban development around the Museum and possible further development of our premises. We will see what the future will bring to us.

Please help us to continue to develop our museum as a focal point of a culture of inclusion, mutual understanding and the openness for others and ourselves. Your support is crucial.

Thanks for all you’ve done for us. Stay tuned.

Next exhibition: All About Tel Aviv. The Invention of a City

Opening on April 7, 2019

All cities invent stories. One claims to be the city that never sleeps, another to have been founded by gods, saints, or even wolves. Recorded history and self-image of cities are equally shaped by fairytale-like and legendary features as they are by modern marketing strategies. Frequently, legends and myths, images and slogans brand themselves on the collective memory in such a way that they end up being taken for the truth despite being fiction. Modern city branding pursues the same goals albeit in a planned and managed process. It is about increasing the city’s appeal as a tourist destination, and as a business and shopping location. At the same time, the construction and cultivation of a positive urban image is meant to influence the citizens’ identification and the various communities’ satisfaction with the city.

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Tel Aviv, Magen David Square, 2018, Photo: Peter Loewy

News from the Museum (Cont'd)

(continued from Page 2)

Tel Aviv-Jaffa reinvented itself, several times, both as part of its founding process as well as in the course of its history. As the first “Hebrew city” in the modern era, Tel Aviv was intended to be two things: a “return to the roots” as well as the negation of the Jewish history of dispersion, a city of new beginnings out of nothing, “built on sand” by emigrants and refugees, from the salvaged suitcases of a vanished European Diaspora. A city for a “people without land” in a “land without people.” Stubbornly persisting is the impression that the city was founded in 1909. Yet, Jewish settlements in Jaffa’s immediate vicinity began to emerge as early as in 1887. The city’s foundation also marks the onset of the repression of Jaffa’s 4000-year-old history and, ultimately, of the expulsion of most of its Arab inhabitants.

Today, the brand “Tel Aviv” is white and sunny, cool, vibrant, liberal, cosmopolitan, and economically successful. Tel Aviv celebrates itself not only as a party and startup metropolis, but mainly as the “worldwide largest ensemble of Bauhaus architecture”; its “White City” as “representation of Modernity’s most important trends in architecture and urban planning in the early 20th century” is a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2003. Nowadays, it is impossible to separate Tel Aviv’s city marketing from its “White City.”

The exhibition “All About Tel Aviv. The Invention of a City” approaches the complex history of this city by searching for traces that represent its architecture and its urban space as the arena of political, cultural, ethnic, and social conflicts. While the hundredth

anniversary of Bauhaus will be celebrated in Europe and Israel in 2019, the Jewish Museum Hohenems wants to look into the basements beneath and the sky above the city for all that disrupts the political and touristic, the social and cultural image of the city—or renders it more complex. After all, Tel Aviv has neither been able to rid itself of the shadows of its history nor of the name of the city of Jaffa whose more than 4000-year-old history it now carries with it. Tel Aviv is darker than its myth of the “White City”—celebrated in exhibitions, conferences, and tourism campaigns, monumental protection measures, and literary evocations—manages to make one believe. At the edges of this myth there are the Moslem and Christian Arabs who were expelled and fled the city, 15,000 Arabs out of formerly 70,000 still living in Jaffa, and also the Jews who emigrated from Arab countries and Iran. These latter immigrants are considered “blacks” as are the Orthodox Jews whose presence is also growing in Tel Aviv. All the more so the fostered immigration of African Jews and, finally, the illegal immigration of African poverty—and labor migrants who have put their stamp on “South Tel Aviv” in particular.

Behind the worldwide admired city branding of Tel Aviv exists also a dark history and present, repressed and concealed. The exhibition “All About Tel Aviv. The Invention of a City” gazes into the hidden places beneath the city, but also into the heights into which Tel Aviv is growing. In the city portrayal of photographer Peter Loewy, who himself was born in Tel Aviv in 1956, and through historical sources, objects, and memorabilia, the exhibition unfurls a multilayered panorama of a fascinating but also haunted city that is far from being the safe bubble outside of the conflicts of our time.



Jaffa,
2018,
Photo: Peter Loewy

European Summer University for Jewish Studies 2019

Ten years of European Summer University in Hohenems: in June/July 2019 we will welcome students from all over Germany, Austria and Switzerland to our 11th program in interdisciplinary Jewish Studies in the Jewish quarter of Hohenems.

Together with our colleagues from the universities of Munich, Basel, Salzburg, Vienna, Zurich and Bamberg this year we invite to an intensive exploration of the world of: “Have a Good Meal. The Meaning of Food.”

The Summer University of 2019 will present new research and discussions about the ritual, symbolic and folkloristic aspects of food and identity—in the Jewish world and beyond.

Second edition of “Old Liberties of Hohenems” available

The second edition of our museum’s newspaper “Old Liberties of Hohenems” is now available online at:

<http://www.jm-hohenems.at/en/publications/backlist/old-liberties-of-hohenems>

The newspaper is full of reports and photographs of our grand Reunion of 2017, speeches and impressions, but also presenting Hohenems’ family histories from all over the world. Please feel free to order hard copies in any number as well in order to get your friends and relatives informed about Hohenems (*we only charge shipping*).

Hohenems – Manhattan. The skyscrapers of Ely Jacques Kahn

With the generous help of the Kahn family and the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems, Ingrid Bertel and Nikolai Dörler were able to finish the English version of their film about life and work of Ely Jacques Kahn, the Hohenems descendant and acclaimed New York architect of the 1920s. A premiere of the film in New York is planned in **Spring 2019**. Stay tuned.

News from the Museum (Cont'd)

Education in and outside of the Jewish Museum Hohenem

Drama Education Tour Along the Escape Routes of 1938



Drama workshop on borders, Photo: Dietmar Waiser

Last year we were able to relaunch our program for pupils and youngsters about escape routes, following the paths of refugees and helpers along the “Old Rhine” between Hohenems and Switzerland.

Walking towards the border between the Jewish Museum along the Emsbach we invite the participants to observe symbolic scenes and movements, giving them an idea of what went on in peoples’ minds at that time and of the difficult decisions to be made.

This theatrical experience appears to be a valuable starting point for lively discussions about the current topic of escape and refugees.

New format: bicycle tours

This summer we introduced two new guided tours on bicycles for all age groups. The first bike tour follows the Old Rhine between Lustenau and Hohenems and enables us to speak about several different escape routes across the border, used by Jewish and political refugees from 1938 to 1945.

Organized in collaboration with the Historical Archive of Lustenau (the town neighboring Hohenems) and a group of Austrians and Swiss participants, this tour connects the stories of refugees with the landscape and also with the history of the Rhine valley and its changing character in the 19th and 20th century, including subjects ranging from the economy of smuggling to the Swiss Asylum policies and the Swiss refugee camp in Diepoldsau.



Bike Tour along the “Old Rhine,” Photo: Jewish Museum Hohenems

Cycling provides a different mode of perception and also a chance to reflect the experiences of the tour, while coming together at various original sites offers the opportunity to participate with own stories, knowledge, and experiences in the local community. A few elder participants were able to recount their own recollections (vivid memories of being a pupil of Paul Grüniger or a little girl who remembers her aunt helping refugees). The program turned out to be highly emotional and moving for the whole group, and is now part of the regular tours of the museum.

The second bike tour, organized in cooperation with the initiative that is preparing the joint application of Dornbirn, Hohenems and Feldkirch for the European Capital of Culture 2024, is focusing on Feldkirch and the border to Liechtenstein.

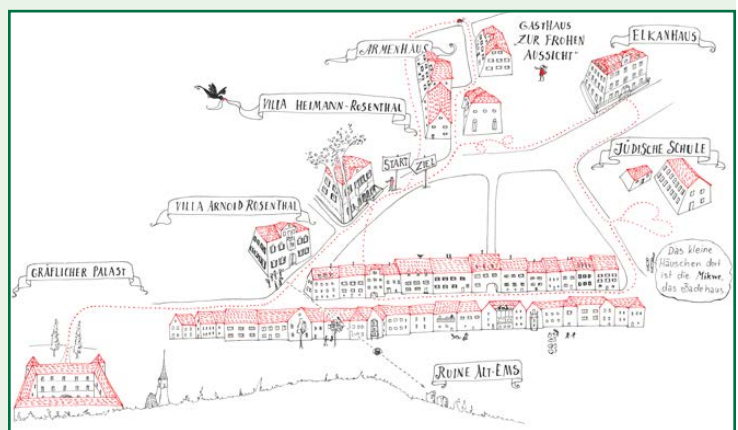
Feldkirch was a second hot spot of escape and resistance during the Third Reich, from the very first days of the Nazis taking power in Austria in March 1938 – when thousands of Viennese Jews fled to Switzerland still by train. The destiny of various Jewish refugees and resistance fighters was decided in the medieval town with its great history of humanism in the Renaissance.

The tour follows the traces of protagonists like Hilda Monte-Olday, a Jewish resistance fighter, who was killed in Feldkirch by border police while trying to get into Liechtenstein during the very last days of the war in 1945, and other victims of the Nazis. Edith Mayer and Heinrich Heinen, a mixed couple that tried to stay together against all odds, attempted to escape into Switzerland through Feldkirch in 1942, only to be arrested and imprisoned in Feldkirch. Edith Mayer was sent to Auschwitz and Heinrich Heinen, after successfully escaping from prison, was finally shot death in Hohenems and is buried in the Hohenems cemetery.

Hidden Treasures in the Jewish Quarter

For families visiting Hohenems there is now a new chance to discover Jewish history: grab a museum rucksack at the local tourism agency, filled with mysterious objects and get going! Tourists and interested locals alike are invited to use all their senses while discovering the Jewish Quarter on their own, following a symbolic map and prompts to use what they find in the backpack. Listen to a composition of Salomon Sulzer, eat some kosher sweets, smell soap as a peddler’s product, or view the ruins of the castle through a magnifying glass.

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Map for the Family Program in the Jewish Quarter

News from the Museum (Cont'd)

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The program also offers opportunities for school groups but works in particular as a family program, leading the participants into the museum where the stories and open-ended questions of the program can be the starting point of a deeper understanding of history.

Project with apprentices: “Harrachgasse 5—People”



Workshop with Collini's apprentices and Günther Blenke, Photos: workshop participants

This year the Collini enterprise, the biggest employer in Hohenems and a world leading metal surface enhancement company, is celebrating its 120 year anniversary. The Jewish Museum was invited to do a project with 12 apprentices in the company, exploring the history of a building in the Jewish quarter. The house on Harrach Lane No. 5 is connected with the history of both the Rosenthals and the Collinis.

Damiano Caollini migrated from the region of Trentino in Italy to Hohenems in 1898 as an ambulant knife sharpener, and opened his first workshop in this building. The building was once owned by the Rosenthals, and much later became the home of Turkish “guest workers,” who became a major part of the industrial workforce in the Rhine valley in the 1960s and 1970s, including as laborers for the Collini company.

In the course of the project the Collini apprentices and the museum researched the story of various residents of the house and their connection to the industrial development and the settlement history of Hohenems. In the end the young people together with local artists created a little monument presenting the story of the building. The building itself was opened to the public during the ceremonies marking Collini's 120th anniversary.



Collections

In 2018 Raphael Einetter and Anika Reichwald attended several curatorial and archival workshops in Austria and abroad, in order to improve our Museum conservation capacities and the quality of preservation of the collections and the preparation of objects in exhibitions. The team has managed to catalogue the main part of the Brunner Collection – a permanent loan from Israel, which arrived in September/ October 2017: Now all objects, arts and documents as well as most photographs have been inventoried and are preserved and stored in the depot.

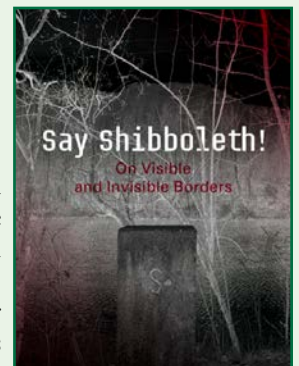
This year six interns and two volunteers helped with the archival work. Hence, over 800 photographs and postcards from Palestine were inventoried; some will be a part of next year's Tel Aviv-exhibition. Another huge project was the on-going inventory of over 1000 books from various donations to the museum's library. The department was not only focused on cataloging, inventory and the digitalization of the over 3,200 documents from the archive. The focus was also on the Yerusha archival project, funded by the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe, which will come to an end after two years of intense research. We are looking forward to a successful completion of these projects and more, new projects in the upcoming year.

Jewish Museum Exhibitions traveling around the globe

“Say Shibboleth!

On Visible and Invisible Borders”

Our show on borders, presented in Hohenems till February 2019, will be shown in the Jewish Museum of Munich between June 2019 and February 2020. We are proud to be able to continue our cooperation on our exhibition projects with the Munich museum.



Our English Catalogue, edited by Boaz Levin, Hanno Loewy, Anika Reichwald (Ed.), *Say Shibboleth! On Visible and Invisible Borders* (Bucher Verlag, Hohenems 2018, 29,80 € + shipping, about 250 p.) is still available. It has contributions by Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Ovidiu Anton, Francis Alys, Emily Apter, Zach Blas, Sophie Calle, Arno Gisinger, Vincent Grunwald, Zali Gurevitch, Gabriel Heim, Katarina Holländer, Ryan S. Jeffery, Leon Kahane, Boaz Levin, Mikael Levin, Hanno Loewy, Fiamma Montezemolo, Pınar Öğrenci, Selim Özdoğan, Anika Reichwald, Frances Stonor Saunders, Fazal Sheikh, Quinn Slobodian, Marina Warner, Vladimir Vertlib and Najem Wali.

“Jukebox. Jewkbox! A Century on Shellac and Vinyl”

Our most successful travelling exhibition ever, presenting the history of global music business and global culture following the career of Shellac and Vinyl, will go to Australia. The Jewish Museum of Sydney will host the exhibition between May 2019 and February 2020.



© Photo courtesy of Dietmar Walser

“THE CLASS OF 1938”

MARJORIE PERLOFF

The Austrian *Akademie der Wissenschaften*, under the auspices of Dr. Johannes Feitlinger, recently launched a series of film interviews with a group of Austrian emigres from Nazi Austria who became well-known university professors in the U.S. (and a few in the UK or Israel). I was fortunate to be chosen to be part of the group, mostly male and mostly scientists and social scientists, which was interviewed. The films are available on YouTube, if you look up the names in question and “Class of 1938.”

The interview itself, which took place in 2016, brought back many memories. Although I have written on my family’s flight from Vienna in my book *The Vienna Paradox* (2004) and have researched the topic further for my more historical book *The Edge of Irony: Modernism in the Shadow of the Habsburg Empire* (2016), I want here to fill in some of the blanks I have only come to understand in recent years.

My assimilated Jewish upper-middle-class family resembled many others in Vienna in not quite anticipating the terrible threat that arose for Austrians with the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor of the German Reich on January 30, 1933. In my own family, that threat was deflected by my maternal grandfather’s position:

Richard Schüller rose through the ranks of the Austrian Civil Service to become a Sektionchef (like a Cabinet secretary), his specialty being commerce. Having worked for every chancellor of the fledgling Austrian Republic since its founding at the end of World War I—Otto Bauer (Socialist), Ignaz Seipel (Christian Social), Engelbert Dollfuss (Christian Social) and finally the ill-fated Kurt Schuschnigg whose failed call for a referendum on Austrian independence in January 1938 led directly to the Nazi Anschluss of March 12—Sektionchef Schüller, the only Jew in the cabinet, had not quite seen the handwriting on the wall, even after the assassination of Dollfuss, four years before the Anschluss. Dollfuss, who had governed without parliament in what was accordingly considered by many to be an Austro-Fascist regime, was implacably opposed to Hitler: in response the Nazis killed him in cold blood in his office on July 25, 1934. Grandfather Schüller was devastated by the murder, but felt he had to stay on so as to help Dollfuss’s successor Kurt Schuschnigg. He wrote some of Schuschnigg’s last speeches and hoped somehow that Mussolini, who had not yet joined forces with Hitler, would intervene. In January 1938, when his nephews, Georg and Herbert Schüller visited his office on the Ballhausplatz to consult with their “insider”

uncle as to whether it was safe to go on a ski vacation in the Vorarlberg, the latter gave them his blessing. The Nazis, he reassured them, would not succeed! As it turned out, my uncles came back to Vienna only with great difficulty, cross-country skiing most of the way. And then both emigrated to the U.S. as soon as they could.

It is often asked why the Austrian Jews were so blind to the Hitler threat from the German Reich next door. To answer this question, one needs to understand the history of the Austrian First Republic, founded in 1918. Austria had never known democracy, and postwar conditions were so dire that one got help wherever one could: in this case from Italy, since France and England would not supply Austria with the basic necessities—grain, fuel, etc. Grandfather Schüller, made welcome in the Italy of the 1920s, thought Mussolini’s Italy the lesser of two evils—the other being Communist Russia. It was also the case that anti-Semitism had been endemic in Austria for so long that one hoped it would somehow go away and, in any case, the middle-class Jews lived a charmed life in the Vienna of the early century; they were the leaders in almost every field: Viennese culture was Austro-Jewish culture. And so they stayed put.

Fortunately, my paternal grandfather, a noted attorney and would-be novelist named Alexander Mintz, more conventionally Jewish than Richard Schüller, was more prescient than the Schüllers. He had put some money in a Swiss bank; otherwise we could not have left as we did. And in February 1938, he was deeply suspicious of the Schuschnigg referendum. As it was, I woke up on the morning of March 12 to be told we were leaving Vienna that very evening because “we are no longer Austrians.” Notice that the word Jew was not mentioned. I was six-and-a-half years old and in first grade. My brother was nine. We had no idea what was going on although Walter, my brother, somehow understood that the students in front of the WASA Gymnasium across the street, a building we could see well from our window, were giving Heil Hitler! salutes.



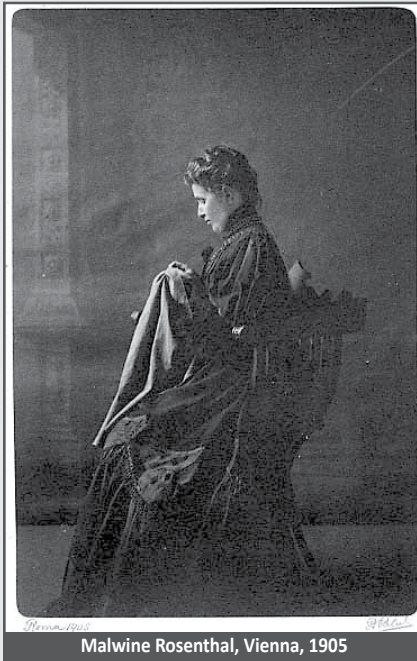
Grandfather (4th from left) with Dollfuss [center] and Cardinal Innitzer in Rome, 1933

“THE CLASS OF 1938” (cont.)

The day was filled with visitors wanting to say goodbye, my grandmother Erna Schüller and her mother Malvine Rosenthal, 1905, a Hohenems Rosenthal by marriage, and a number of others. Our suitcases were packed: we were only allowed to take hand luggage—four suitcases in all. Within hours, the word came through that the Hungarian border had closed, which meant the only available exit route was via Switzerland. The decision was to take the night train to

Zurich. My maternal grandparents stayed behind; they hoped to come in a few days but Grandfather felt he had to settle his financial affairs and secure his pension: he was almost seventy and had worked for the government for more than thirty years! And he thought—mistakenly, as it turned out—that his friends in the ministry would help him!

When I remember that fateful day and its aftermath, I recall being more excited than upset but clearly there was some trauma. For one thing, I have entirely blocked out



Malvine Rosenthal, Vienna, 1905

my first term of school. Although I can remember the summer vacations very well—the hotels, inns, and landscape in the Tyrol, as well as our neighbors in Selva, and although I have vivid memories of the nursery, with its white enamel stove and white little table and chairs, and of the Rathauspark, where I played every day, and of our Kinderfräulein Kathi, I cannot tell you anything

about school—its name, the building, the teachers, the other children, the lessons. Indeed, the six months from September 1937 to March 1938 are a complete blank. Clearly, I knew how to read and write a bit, but how did we learn these things?

No doubt, in that six-month period, there must have been turmoil both at school and on the radio news. I must have received Nazi taunts at school, for these were evidently very common. Some girls may not have wanted to play with me. But this is all supposition: I have no idea what daily school-life was like.

What I do remember, as if it were yesterday, is our actual departure from 7 Hörll Gasse, in the 9th Bezirk.

Our apartment was on the fourth floor. It had a large living room, a dining room with breakfast area looking out on a little balcony overlooking the street, two large bedrooms, and maids' rooms behind the kitchen. On this particular day, we were told we were not going down in the elevator—that would be too conspicuous—but would take the stairs and that we children should be as quiet as possible! It must have been about 5 PM. We came downstairs, my parents Max and Ilse carrying the suitcases, and I remember that when we got to the first floor (in Europe, the one above the ground floor), the concierge, an unpleasant woman whom my father had long suspected of being a Nazi, came out of her apartment and nodded to us with a malicious smile. No doubt, as soon as we were gone, she ran upstairs to ransack an apartment full of expensive furniture, carpets, silver and china, and a huge library. Once downstairs, in any case, we caught a taxi to the train station. We were told that there we would meet Grandfather Mintz, his daughter Stella (my father's sister) and her husband Otto Strauss and their twin daughters Hedy and Greta. Walter and I didn't care for the twins, who were ten, and immediately made snide remarks about them. Gerti (Gertrude) Schüller, the widow of Richard's brother Ludwig, came with us



Gabriele at 5 in Rathaus Park, Vienna



Horllgasse 7, Vienna

“THE CLASS OF 1938” (cont.)

too so we were ten in all, occupying two compartments. Gerti was a Taussig, one of the richest banking families in Austria, and had been baptized in childhood; she was elegant and snobbish and couldn't believe she had to leave Vienna.

The train left the station and soon we children evidently fell asleep. I can only imagine what the adults were going through. They had absolutely no idea where they would live or what was in store for them. At the moment, there was just one goal: to get out of Austria.

At Innsbruck, the border station, the train came to a screeching halt and we were all told to disembark. Only Aunt Gerti was allowed to continue: evidently, she was considered an Aryan and left alone. The rest of us were taken to the police station, the adults were body searched, the luggage was turned inside out, and money, a small amount at best, was taken away. In the letter my mother wrote to her sister Hilde in London, which I cite in full in *Vienna Paradox*, there is a description of the humiliating process: the insults hurled by the SS police, the nastiness, the fear. But I didn't really understand and I recall sitting on a hatbox while Mama read to me from my favorite children's book, *Die Lustigen Neun*. And then we had ham sandwiches in what I refer to in my childhood memoir, written in New York at age 7, as a very nice “Gasthaus”—evidently the station restaurant. We finally continued on the train, arriving in Zurich in the early morning hours. We had reservations at the Pensione Schmelzberg.

Two rather happy months followed—happy at least for the children! We didn't have to go to school, the Pensione had a nice garden, we were given English lessons by my mother and put on a performance of *Little Red Riding Hood*, with Walter as the wolf and myself as the heroine. We also invented lots of games, mostly games of conflict with the twins and their newly found friend, a girl named Winetu after the Karl May heroine—Karl May being the enormously popular novelist whom Hitler much admired!

Early in our stay, I broke my middle finger playing hopscotch and had to have a small plaster cast. But otherwise my main “problem” is that I had to play with

Walter—a boy!—rather than my beloved Rathaus Park friend, Dundi. I have a low boredom threshold and I recall sometimes feeling very BORED. But what of our parents? I can't even imagine what they went through.

In Zurich, both the Mintzes and Strausses immediately applied for their Visas to the U.S. Evidently, so my cousin Hedy, who overheard the adults talking late at night, told me, at first there was talk of going to Italy! This may now sound insane given the status of Mussolini's Italy, but at the time my parents, and especially Grandfather and Grandmother Schuller, adored Italy. Richard had made many treaties with the Italians over the years and had spent many months in Rome. Susi, my mother's sister, had married an Italian in 1936. His name was Giorgio Piroli, he was very handsome and Susi had met him a few years earlier on a vacation (chaperoned by her mother) at the Lido outside Venice. It was love at first sight, even with a dictionary that, Susi told me later, only went up to the letter “m.”

Giorgio knew no German. He was a physician, a gynecologist, from a small village near Perugia and his family was certainly proto-Fascist. Giorgio's sister Mimi was married to an army officer: I later knew him as “Il Generale,” and he had served in the Abyssinian war. Giorgio himself had to perform required army service for two years, but he was quite apolitical. No doubt his family opposed the union with an Austrian Jew, but Grandfather was a famous, cosmopolitan gentleman, a VIP, and on good terms with Mussolini and others in the regime. As for Grandmama Schuller, she later wrote in a letter to her third daughter Hilde, then in London, that Rome was the place she felt most at home. The Sistine chapel, the museums, the natural beauty, the flowers, the blue skies, the cafes where one could sit outdoors and sip Cinzano: this was Grandmama's dream, less than a year before Mussolini and Hitler signed their “Pact of Steel,” the treaty of military and economic cooperation (May 23, 1939).

The grandparents, in any case, had bought Susi a spacious apartment, with room for Giorgio's medical office, on Viale Mazzini 55, not far from St Peter's. She was to live

there till she died in the mid 1990s, having lost her son Riccardo as well. Susi became quite a well-known historian, writing books about the Borgias and a history of St. Peter's cathedral. But her life, which was to be very difficult during World War II, remained fraught: she was, after all, always an outsider in a Rome, first Fascist and then, after the War, heavily Communist.

Fortunately for me, my father Maximilian Mintz and his father Alexander Mintz understood early on that Italy—indeed Continental Europe in general—was not an option for Jewish refugees (think of all the emigres who went to Paris!) and that we must surely try to emigrate to the United States. For the Visa, one had to have a sponsor, and ours was a cousin of my father's, Heinrich Kronstein from Frankfurt, who had emigrated to New York with his family in 1935. He was a lawyer, later a law professor at Georgetown and an ardent convert to Catholicism: his sons—Karl Martin and Werner—went all through Catholic schools in America. When we first came to New York in August 1938, we played with them regularly.

During the interview for “The Class of 1938,” I was asked whether my family had ever considered emigration to Israel. The question surprised me in that for a family like mine, long secularized and regarding itself as firmly Austrian, the very idea of Israel was out of the question. I never so much as heard it mentioned, and later, my parents never expressed the slightest desire to visit Israel although I have been many times. No doubt this was a blind spot on the part of the assimilated upper-class Viennese Jews, but for them, nation and culture regularly trumped religion and ethnicity.

So America was our destination, and the first step was to learn English in advance. Throughout April and May of '38, Walter and I had daily lessons from my mother, whose high school English was of course British English! Accordingly, later, when we arrived in America and ran out to play with my cousins and their friends, we didn't understand one word! I remember being surprised by the use of “Yay-ah” for “yes” and the New York accented “dwah” for “drawer” or “hembugga” for “hamburger.”

“THE CLASS OF 1938” (cont.)

But at any rate we learned the basics of English and were kept quite busy until June when our Visas came through for August. In the interim my immediate family (not the Strausses) travelled to Italy for a goodbye visit with Susi and Grandmama Schuller who had managed to travel there with my Great Grandmother Rosenthal, while the latter waited for her Visa, having been born in Budapest and hence on the Hungarian quota. We stayed first in the hills of Vallombrosa and then at the beach in Ostia and I regarded the whole stay as a lovely vacation. For one thing, I learned how to swim, first with a rubber tube, and then independently, in the lovely warm Mediterranean sea.

What was going through the minds of my parents I cannot imagine. My mother was brilliantly adept at keeping up an air of “normality.” She was thirty-four at the time, my father thirty-nine. They had no idea what awaited them in the entirely unknown U.S. And she must have worried a great deal about her father, left behind in Vienna, where things were getting more dangerous every day, his assets having been seized, and so on. He finally escaped in the summer of 1938, by walking on foot across the Alps, as in *The Sound of Music*: I tell this story in *Vienna Paradox*. But in the meantime, we were in Rome living a seemingly normal life, what with Mother playing monopoly with Walter and me, taking us for walks, and so on.

This faux-idyll lasted till early August when we left on the train for Rotterdam to catch the SS Veendam to New York. The cross-country train ride was scary: I can still remember that. We had to get out—I think at Basle in Switzerland, and get our passports stamped, and everywhere, as we crossed Europe, train conductors and customs inspectors gave us dirty looks and my mother looked worried. It took two days, I think, to get to Rotterdam, where we were met by my mother’s sister Hilde and her husband Otto Kurz. Both art historians, they had moved to England in 1935, knowing they couldn’t stay in Vienna where the law forbade Jews to teach at the university. Otto had been offered a job at the Warburg Institute in London, with many other famous refugees

like Ernst Gombrich, Hans Tietze, and Erika Tietze-Konrad. And so they came for a farewell visit to Holland: who knew if we would ever see one another again!

The ocean voyage took nine days! I list detailed shipboard activities in my childhood memoir (see *Vienna Paradox*), so won’t do so again here. It was a wonderful interlude of playing games and eating what seemed to us delicious food. Children don’t look far ahead and so we were satisfied to have days of sheer play and entertainment. There were shuffleboard contests and hop scotch games and many children to play with. It all ended with our arrival, on a typically scorching August day, in New York, or rather in Hoboken. Our sublet apartment was in Riverdale (the Bronx) near 232 St. We children and Grandfather Mintz went there by cab; the others took the subway. I cannot imagine how that must have felt in a totally strange country! But I remember liking the new house because the garden had a sandbox and swings and I could play there! And within a few days I was registered for school at P.S.7.

The new emigres from Austria and Germany were always running into one another. The second day in Riverdale, on the street, my mother ran into Else Kaufmann. She was an acquaintance only, not a real friend, but her

husband was the famous Felix Kaufmann, once a member of the Vienna School of philosophy. They lived around the corner from us and I soon became friendly with their son Hansi, a year younger than I and renamed George, who became my best friend that fall. He, Walter, and I played Monopoly or Sorry! every day and were quite content even as my mother tried to learn how to run a household in America, without the accustomed cleaner and cook. We had no car so trips to the grocery store were frequent and the store was “down the hill” below Ewen Park. Riverdale itself was still semi-rural, with many empty lots to be developed and no shops at all. And my parents had very little money so all shopping had to be handled frugally.

My father soon registered at Columbia University in the CPA program—he couldn’t afford to study for three years to become a lawyer again! And by the time school started in September, we all settled down to our new routine—a routine punctuated by the terrible news of Hitler’s exploits and letters from Vienna and elsewhere, detailing the fates of friends and relatives. By September 1, 1939, the war had begun. Letters to and from London (Hilde) and Rome (Susi) were heavily censored. My grandparents were still in England, where they had fled.

I want, in these remaining pages, to describe daily life in the war years for a refugee family like ours. It was, to say the least, a unique experience, since my family had lost everything and had to begin over again from scratch.

After the summer sublet, we found an apartment in a two-family red brick house at 3204 Oxford Avenue.

One went up a few steps from the walkway to the front door, which led directly into a small living room. Next to it was a modest little kitchen with a “dinette,” and then two bedrooms and one bathroom. A back entrance by the kitchen, led to a rickety back porch; I always came in that way. We had no furniture and my parents gradually accumulated a sofa, a rug, a few tables and chairs and beds for Walter and me. Mother and Daddy slept on the convertible sofa in the living room. There was one hall closet where they kept their clothes. I had the larger



Max and Ilse Mintz in front of 3204 Oxford Avenue, Riverdale NY, 1939

“THE CLASS OF 1938” (cont.)

bedroom, Walter the other. Sharing the bathroom seemed to pose no problems—we had always done so. And as a child, I found the space more than adequate; I had room for my paper dolls (including the Dionne quintuplets) and toys. We had one little radio to share and Walter and I fought over it all the time: he would come and rip the plug out of the wall and take it to his room. If I cried long enough, mother made him give it back to me!

Mother, who had earned a doctorate in Economics in Vienna, found herself observing the daily schedule of the typical housewife. There were not as yet washers and dryers, much less dishwashers, and the fridge was a small “icebox.” On Monday, mother did the laundry, on Tuesday she ironed, on Wednesday she baked cakes and tarts, on Thursday she vacuumed, and on Friday she shopped for groceries. In later years, Grandfather would come over and keep her company while she washed and ironed Daddy’s shirts, and they would chat about economics. Meanwhile, Daddy went down to Columbia on the subway every day and then studied evenings and weekends. On Sundays, we sometimes made “Ausflüge” (excursions) to such places as the Statue of Liberty, the Bronx Zoo, and, in 1940 the World’s Fair! All the while Mother and Daddy were learning English idioms and expressions and I gave Mother a few lessons since I rapidly picked up the new language, Bronx accent and all.

I don’t think my parents were unhappy: they were determined to “make good” in the new world even if they did look down on American “culture” as hopelessly limited and vulgar. Some “do good” ladies from a charitable organization based in Scarsdale came to help mother and Aunt Stella learn about shopping and housework in America. I recall that a Mrs. Trueblood

took Mother to her first supermarket and explained that you could just put all the items you wanted in a cart and wait to pay at the end. Great excitement. And you didn’t have to go to a drugstore for medicines or bathroom items: many drugstore items were sold right in the supermarket—in those days the A & P. Most people, in those days of a kinder, gentler America, were hospitable to their neighbors. Everyone lived frugally: the children played rope or hopscotch or stick ball in the yard below or in Ewen Park.

The latter was very hilly—ideal for sledding—but also very unkempt with dirty patches dotting the grass and old wooden fences and benches. Still, no one considered it dangerous and it wasn’t. A few “bums” might be sleeping on benches but they were considered quite harmless.

P. S. 7 was a rundown sandstone building that looked like a prison with accompanying prison yard. It served the working-class community (heavily Irish and Italian, with a few blacks) of Kingsbridge and also a part of the more fashionable Riverdale above the park; I just missed being eligible for P.S. 81, in a better neighborhood. From 2d grade on, I walked to and from school alone, a fifteen-twenty minute walk, past blocks of ramshackle frame houses with unkempt

yards, then across Riverdale Avenue and up the hill through the park. I was not the least bit scared and enjoyed the walk. By 1941 when I was ten, two boys from school would sometimes chase me home and call me a dirty Jew. I remember their names: Kenny Moynahan and Joe Pugni. I told my mother who just shrugged and said, “never mind, they can’t do anything to you. Just ignore them.” These were the “sticks and stones can hurt my bones, but names can never hurt me” days—the antithesis of our current situation, where everything can be considered a micro-aggression. And no one thought of any of these experiences as “traumatic”: one was, so my parents felt, meant to learn from the difficulties of daily life and move on.

P.S. 7 had very strict rules. When the whistle blew in the schoolyard before 9 A.M., you had to find your partner, hold her hand, and march into the auditorium for assembly and flag-raising. The Pledge of Allegiance was the first English “poem” I learned; in those days the line was “One nation, indivisible” not “One nation, under God.” Then we marched to class and sat at our desks, which we were not allowed to open except when directed to do so. Nor were we allowed to raise our hands when



Ewen Park in winter and spring

“THE CLASS OF 1938” (*cont.*)

we wanted to be called on. Instead, we had to cross our fingers and stretch our arms as rigidly as we could, indicating readiness to respond.

I soon made a number of friends although I never saw them on weekends or in the summer for they lived “down the hill” and that was too far to go to play.

The first summer in Riverdale (1939), when I obviously had nothing to do and was just hanging out in my room, my mother took me by the hand and we went down to the park. To my mortification, she approached two girls who were playing and asked if Gabrielle (my real name) could join them! They said yes. One was Eileen Moore, who became one of my best friends. She went to the local Catholic school and her father was superintendent—i.e. caretaker—of an apartment house nearby. The other girl was Barbara Feldman, a little younger and a little whiny. We played “walk the fence” for hours. The fence went along the stone steps up through the park and was round and wooden and rather narrow; it was easy to fall off. I became an expert at fence-walking and at jump rope and hopscotch. We had no athletic equipment—too expensive.

I can still remember the day my father came home and announced proudly that

he had gotten a job—with the accounting firm Paterson, Teele & Dennis. They were a Gentile firm and at first reluctant to hire a Jew but finally agreed to do so. Daddy worked there for the next twenty-five years, rising to become a partner. PT & D was on Wall St: to get there one took a bus to Dykeman Ave. (20 minutes) and then the IND subway—almost an hour. Such trips were par for the course. Daddy’s initial salary was \$27 per week, which would be c. \$430 today. We had to live within very strict means. I wanted and got ice skates (\$9.95) but could never afford figure skates, which cost twice as much (\$18.95). I had only a few dresses and one pair of shoes. Meals in restaurants were out of the question. Rationing meant we ate our share of brains and lungs (which I still can’t stand); then again, no one we knew was a vegetarian.

My parents had a whole colony of refugee friends—Walter and I called them the Refs—but knew almost no Americans. Later when Mother taught at Columbia, this changed; she made some very good friends among the professors and economists at the National Bureau. In the early years, there was constant socializing with old and new émigré friends: primarily Jause (tea parties) at which open-faced sandwiches and little cakes were served with coffee and tea, and occasionally a little sherry or wine. Everyone shared their experiences; everyone made “Beiunski” claims—which is to say that “bei uns”—back in Vienna or Berlin—everything was much better! The Metropolitan Opera could not compare to the Vienna opera! The subway was horribly dirty and inconvenient! And so on. Many refugees quickly made good; others faltered and couldn’t quite make it. On the whole, people were incredibly grateful to be safe in the US and wanted to start a new life.

My father, who was a true intellectual and avid reader, began to interest himself in Americana. What was ostensibly, so refugees had thought, Al Capone country, turned out to have some amazing writers—Henry James and his brother William, Herman Melville, George Santayana—and great jurists like Oliver Wendell Holmes. American democracy, whatever its faults, was an amazing system, what with the

separation of powers into legislative, executive, and judicial branches. However anti-Semitic some Americans might be, they could not, so my parents felt, have used Hitler’s tactics: there were too many checks and balances.

Then, too, as I learned at school, there was an amazing openness, a generosity of spirit in the US in those days. People were naturally curious about foreigners and at my lower middle-class school, the kids asked me if I wore wooden shoes at home (was I Dutch?) and why I wore my hair in braids, then not at all the fashion. The kids were all bubble gum addicts: something I could never get used to. They pulled the pink gum out of their mouths and made bracelets with it: I did find that creepy. But it was just a matter of custom.

I regularly got into trouble for not following orders. In sixth grade when we had to make our own graduation dresses out of organdy and ribbon, I became impatient, and cut my neckline out too wide, so that I had to make tucks to make it fit. Mrs. Engel, the teacher, made me stand on a chair and said to the class, “Look everybody, this is what NOT TO DO.” I don’t remember being upset; it seemed funny. Again, in 8th grade, I ruined my final penicillin report by getting glue on the blue and yellow paper cover. Mrs. Cahill commanded me to do it over. But I knew I was switching to the Fieldston School and so simply said NO!

When the War ended in 1945—I was fourteen—many of the refugees in my parents’ circle wanted to go back to visit Vienna or their other native cities, just out of curiosity. My parents refused to go. For them it was much too painful; they had been much too happy in Vienna, much too fully at home in this great cultural and cultured city. One couldn’t relive the past, one couldn’t go back! They had been ousted and that was that. Later, they travelled in France and Belgium, England and the Netherlands but these were places they didn’t know well so it was OK. But they never got to see California, where I have lived since 1978. I am really sorry about that; I think, like so many Europeans, they would have loved our own “Riviera.”

I myself wanted, as I detail in Vienna



Gabrielle and friends, 3rd grade, in front of P. S. 7 June 1941

“THE CLASS OF 1938” (cont.)

Paradox, to be a true-blue American. When I became a citizen in 1944, I foolishly changed my name from Gabriele to Marjorie (Margie), all because the popular girl in my Fieldston 8th grade class was one Margie Leff. I still make my M's like hers with a big rounded sweep. I hated, in those days, to have to talk German to my grandparents or to hear all about the émigré colony. Only in my late fifties, did I start to develop an interest in my heritage, in the colorful and brilliant world which is Vienna and which I now visit regularly in keeping with my work

on Wittgenstein and on various Austrian poets and novelists. When I walk down the Kärtnerstraße, I feel curiously at home. At heart I am still, after all, a European: I have a natural affinity for the cuisine, the culture, the Gemütlichkeit of Vienna. And in Los Angeles, I have many friends from the same milieu. Just yesterday I had dinner with a cardiac surgeon friend named John Benfield—alias Hans Bienenfeld—who is exactly my age. We swap stories about Wien: he has renewed his Austrian citizenship for the sake of his children and grandchildren.

He is not bitter about Vienna and we both regard the trauma we underwent as ultimately productive, teaching us how to cope with the vicissitudes of life. We deplore the endless nursing of grievances now endemic to U.S. culture: when our children complain that in the political realm, things have never been worse, we tell them, oh yes, they have!

Much worse...

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