

The Balters and the Shoah

In 1909, the Balter family moved to Vienna from Czernowitz, Bukovina and two years later they moved to an apartment in a newly completed building in the grounds of 34, Große Stadtgutgasse, Leopoldstadt, 2nd district.¹ By this time, Ignatz Balter (b. 1864) was a successful merchant and his wife Cäcilie (b. 1867, née Czarne Reder) had given him three healthy children: Sidonie (b. 28.07.1897), Sylvia (b. 19.02.1902) and Maximilian (b. 5.12.1905).



34 Große Stadtgutgasse:
street facade (left) and rear building (right)

The parents clearly attached great importance to a good education: Sidonie studied piano at the Academy for Music and Performing Arts, where Maximilian later studied acting and drama, while also attending lectures at the University. After leaving a girls' high school, Sylvia started working in business, but at the age of 27 she enrolled at the University of Vienna to study

¹ This is a panoramic sketch of the author's mother's family, the Balters, before, during and after World War II. It is largely a translation of the report written by Verena Kustatscher and Michael Lunardi, current residents of the apartment block where the Balters lived, as part of a local project of remembrance. Their original work, in German, can be found at <http://www.grossestadtgutgasse34.at/index.html> and at <http://www.grossestadtgutgasse34.at/balter.html>. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Verena and Michael for their huge effort in uncovering information we never thought existed, especially through their access to the Viktor Frankl Archive in Vienna, and for much, much more. The rest of the account is taken from family memories and personal conversations with aunt Sylvia and aunt Myriam.

German, English and Philosophy, completing her studies with a doctoral dissertation on Isolde Kurz in 1934.

In 1919, **Sidonie Balter** married a young medical student from Lithuania, whom her uncle Carl Leon had met on a train in central Europe. The uncle persuaded this young man, Herman, to manage his farm in German East Africa in exchange for Sidonie's hand in marriage, and he agreed. A year later, Sidonie gave birth to a young daughter in Berlin whom she named Elizabeth (b.16.09.1920). She then returned to her parent's home in Vienna for two years, before setting off to join her husband on the sisal estate near Lushoto, in the Usumbara Mountains of northern Tanganyika (now Tanzania). On arriving in Naples to embark for Africa, Sidonie's little daughter was kidnapped. Only by a miracle did she manage to retrieve the little girl before the ship departed. Sidonie also took her piano, which had to be carried by a team of porters for many miles from the port at Tanga to their home in the Usumbara Mountains. In this remote setting, the family were frequently visited by wild animals, such as pythons and lions, and conditions there must have been very different from the Viennese way of life that Sidonie was accustomed to. She was unable to have any more children, because of the anti-malarial medication she was taking (Quinine), after her husband narrowly survived a serious complication of this disease (black-water fever). Yet their only child, Elizabeth, grew up healthy, attended the local school and completed her education with a secretarial course. After World War II, she moved to Dar-Es-Salaam, where she married Daniel, of Anglo-Irish origin. They had two children, Lynne, who was born in 1950, and myself in 1954. Sidonie died of a stroke in 1956 and less than a year later we immigrated to England. Sidonie's husband joined us there a few years later, and lived with us until his death in 1976.

By remaining in East Africa, Sidonie and Herman escaped Hitler's genocidal Jew-hatred and the horrors of World War II, which now confronted the rest of her family, still residing at the apartment in Große Stadtgutmasse 34, Leopoldstadt, Vienna II.



After receiving her PhD in August 1934, **Sylvia Balter**, Sidonie's younger sister, started work at the 'Praterstraße 74' branch of the Vienna Workers' Libraries, initially as a librarian and then, from 1st September, 1936, as the manager—a rare exception for a Jew in those times of Austrofascism and rising anti-Semitism. According to an inspection report, it was a branch with 90% Jewish readership. Her expense-reimbursed voluntary work ended with a forced resignation on March 23, 1938, "because she does not meet the conditions for employment in a public position".²

After Sidonie had left home (1922), and their father (1922) and mother (1937) had died, Sylvia and Maximilian shared the family home at Große Stadtgutmasse 34, since they were still both

² The information is taken from the archives of the Vienna Libraries. A brief overview of the history of the origins and changes in the city's libraries can be found at <http://www.buechereien.wien.at/de/ueberuns/geschichte>.

single. However, they were expelled from this apartment the day after the *Reichskristallnacht* in November 1938 (their registration ended on November 10th, 1938). Together, they found shelter with their 58-year-old aunt, Fanny Reder (b. 12.06.1880), who lived nearby at Czerninplatz 4. The three had to share a room, because the three other rooms in the apartment had already been rented to strangers.³

Fanny Reder, Sylvia and Max's aunt, remained in that apartment until April 9th, 1942, when she

9. APR. 1942 IZBICA		
529	Rathaus Regine Sara	9, Liechtensteinstr. 32/34 28.9.96
528	Rathaus Vita Sara	" 19.7.31
125	Rattner Ing, Emil Israel	3. Lagerg. 6/23 22.10.78
126	Rattner Rosa Sara	" 23.2.91
938	Rawitz Beile Sara	4. Margarethenstr. 8/8 26.7.69
539	Rechmitzer Irene Sara	1. Liebenbergg. 7/24 14.8.78
176	Reder Fanny Sara	2. Czerninpl. 4/5 12.6.80
727	Reich Emilie Sara	9. Berggasse 15/9 12.9.72
726	Reich Norbert Israel	" 9.5.84
505	Reichl Mele Maria Julia Sara	3. Invalidenstr. 1/9 17.12.74
470	Reif Otilie Sara	2. Unt. Donaustr. 33/13 7.2.74
279	Reins Mathilde Sara	7. Breiteng. 7/25 26.7.79
658	Reinhold Jamb Israel	2. Zirkug. 28/5 15.5.74
878	Reininger Frieda Sara	2. Unt. Donaustr. 27/4 13.7.88
877	Reininger Siegfried Israel	" 20.9.78
267	Reischer Giuseppina Sara	1. Heinrichsg. 3/25 6.4.83
824	Reischer Regine Sara	9. Porzellang. 32/3 30.4.77
166	Reiss Alfred Ismael	2. Ob. Donaustr. 91/17 17.10.83
167	Reiss Sofie Sara	" 15.10.85
583	Reissmann Ernestine Sara	2. Körnerg. 7/17 15.4.79
423	Rendl Mina Sara	9. Vereinsstiege 4/10 4.11.10
792	Richter Alfred Israel	9. Porzellang. 8/21 27.11.83
495	Ribber Cecillie Sara	9. Rossauerg. 3/ 6.1.03
13	Riedeck Ella Sara	7. Apollg. 8/14 7.9.72
12	Riedeck Erwin Ismael	" 25.1.65
393	Riegler Ilse Sara	2. Unt. Augartenstr. 16/20 12.6.14
394	Riegler Samuel Heinrich Israel	" 10.8.81
395	Riegler Valerie Sara	" 15.12.88
270	Riesel Mina Sara	1. Heinrichsg. 3/25 28.8.73
287	Ritscher Richard Israel	2. Flossg. 9/15 15.12.1901
375	Robitschek Emilie Sara	2. Credlerstr. 3/11 12.8.80

was deported by train to Izbica Lubelska in Poland. No more was heard of aunt Fanny. The conditions at the Izbica were appalling, so she either died of starvation or disease in that ghetto, or she was gassed at one of the extermination camps nearby, Belzec or Sobibor, to which there were regular transports from Izbica.⁴ Long before that, however. Sylvia and Max had managed to flee from Vienna.

From November 1938 until her escape in June 1939, Sylvia was unemployed and penniless, surviving on tutoring and food donations from the Jewish Community of Vienna (*Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, IKG*). After receiving a visa for England in mid-May 1939, and the necessary funding for her journey from the Jewish community, she was finally able to flee from Vienna at the beginning of June. She arrived in England with one small suitcase and 10 pounds sterling in her pocket.

³ These statements, as well as others about the personal situation of Sylvia and Maximilian Balter before and after the *Anschluss*, are based on information in the questionnaire of the welfare center of the Israelite Community—Emigration Department, as well as the associated processing sheets.

⁴ Number 176 on transport 17 from Vienna, Austria to Izbica, Krasnystaw, Lublin, Poland on 09/04/1942: source is *Namentliche Erfassung der österreichischen Holocaustopfer, Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, Wien* (Documentation Centre for Austrian Resistance, Vienna), accessed via victim search on the website of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. For the historical narrative, see *The Holocaust: the Jewish Tragedy*, by Martin Gilbert, London: Fontana Press, 1987; 302-328; and for further information on the conditions at Izbica, see e.g., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Izbica_Ghetto; <https://www.holocausthistoricalsociety.org.uk/contents/ghettosa-i/izbica.html>.

Following the start of the war in September 1939, Sylvia was interned on the Isle of Man to clarify her refugee status, like other Austrian refugees in England. On release, she found a job as a housekeeper in Wolverhampton, and a few years later, she was given permanent employment at the head office of Robert Maxwell's "Pergamon Press" in Oxford, where she was responsible for dispatching journals around the world.

At about that time, in the mid 1950's, she moved to London and rented a small room in Bayswater and then Notting Hill. She used to stay with a family near Oxford during the week, and returned to London at the weekend—a routine she kept up until her retirement at the age of 85. On public holidays, aunt Sylvia would come and visit us at our home in Kent, where she could often be persuaded to make 'Apfelstrudel'. In the mid 1970's she was awarded an Austrian pension in recognition of her original displacement. She never married and loved to frequent the theatre in London. She also studied Italian to an advanced level, as she liked to spend her annual holidays in Italy, always travelling by train, for fear of flying by aeroplane. After her retirement, she continued living independently in London until 1990, when she moved to Wroxham, Norfolk to live with her niece, my mother. However, in April 1993 she became unwell with heart failure and was admitted to a small hospital at North Walsham, where she died on May 2nd at the age of 91. Until the end of her life, Sylvia kept an almost total silence on her past, and spoke very little about her family origins. Perhaps the greatest sorrow of her long life, however, was the premature death of her younger brother, Maximilian.



From the left: Max, Sylvia and their niece, Elizabeth (Sidonie's daughter) in England, 1950.

Maximilian Balter was born on December 5th, 1905 in Czernowitz, Bukovina and was obviously versatile. He first attended the Gymnasium in Kleine Sperlgasse and in the 7th grade moved to the Bundesreformrealgymnasium in Vienna VIII, from which he graduated with honors. He then studied for 4 years at the University of Vienna as a regular student of the Philosophy Faculty (German literature, philosophy/psychology, art history) and, in parallel, took the acting and drama course with Armin Seydelmann at the Academy for Music and Performing Arts. In 1931/32 he also attended the Max Reinhardt Seminar.

Initially overlapping with his studies (until 1927), he was a member of the ensemble at the Deutsches Volkstheater (seasons 1926/27, 1927/28 and 1929/30), the Stadttheater Meißen (1928/29), the Stadttheater Aussig a.d.E. (1930/31), at the Stadttheater Innsbruck (1932/33) and with the exile theater ensemble "Die Komödie" in Luxembourg (1935/36; with appearances at the Stadttheater Luxembourg). In following years, he had engagements at two small Vienna

theaters, the “Theater für 49” and “Das moderne Theater am Schwarzenbergplatz” (1936 and 1937). According to his own reports, he also worked as a secretary and journalist.

Like his sister Sylvia, he too had been searching for an escape route from May 1938, but evidently did not get a visa for one of his desired countries. At the end of July 1939, completely penniless, he finally received a ticket to Milan, in Italy, from the emigration department of the Jewish community.

Until August 1939, it was apparently still possible to enter Italy with a tourist visa and to stay legally in the country for up to six months, despite the introduction of the Italian race laws in autumn 1938. According to his cousin, Myriam Redi (originally Reder), whose family lived in Trieste, Max visited her family there at some point after his arrival in Italy.

For Max Balter, as for many others, fascist Italy was only intended as a departure point for another destination. However, after Italy entered the war on June 10, 1940, he was no longer able to leave the country via one of the ports, as Jewish refugees were put on an equal footing with "members of enemy states" and were interned in so-called "concentration camps". This is what happened to Maximilian Balter and Walter Frankl, with whom Max stayed following his arrival in Italy, since Walter was the brother of his school friend Viktor Frankl.⁵ On 20th June, 1940, they were both arrested during a raid in a public park and taken to the San Vittore State Prison, where they shared a cell together for two weeks. Both were then transferred to the Campagna internment camp in the province of Salerno on July 5, 1940.⁶ From there, at the end of August 1940, they were transferred to the Tortoreto Stazione internment camp in the Abruzzo region, on the Ancona—Bari railway line.⁷

⁵ Max Balter and Viktor Frankl attended the Gymnasium together in the Kleine Sperlgasse (the "Sperleum") from the 1st grade until the 7th grade, when Balter moved to the Bundesreformrealgymnasium in the 8th district, but remained in contact with several of his former school friends from the "Sperleum". In addition to Viktor Frankl, these included Eugen Hofmann and Felix Grünberger. Although scattered due to the forced emigration (Eugen Hofmann had emigrated to the USA, Dr Felix Grünberger to Shanghai), contact remained intact even after the end of the war. Balter's close friendships with Viktor Frankl and his brother Walter, as well as those between his school friends, are documented in a lively correspondence (1946-1949) between Balter and V. Frankl preserved in the Viktor Frankl Archive.

⁶ The subject of Balter's first letters to Viktor Frankl was, among other matters, the fate of his brother Walter. Before his expulsion from Vienna, Walter Frankl worked as an interior and furniture designer under the artistic name Walter Franke (See Veronika Pfolz: “Nach Italien emigriert – drei Künstlerinnen und Künstler”, in *Zwischenwelt*, Vol. 22, No. 1/2 [August 2005], pp. 61f. Veronika Pfolz was apparently not aware that Walter Frankl was Viktor Frankl's brother). In the letter of April 23, 1946, Balter briefly reported on the time he spent together with Walter Frankl in Milan and in the Campagna and Tortoreto camps. The date of his arrest and detention in the state prison is also confirmed by a letter from the *Archivio di Stato di Milano* with reference to the San Vittore prison register. A mutual acquaintance from the time in Milan was Max Sipser, an advertising artist and caricaturist from Vienna. He too stayed in the Santa Maria al Bagno camp before he was able to emigrate to the USA with his wife in July 1944.

⁷ A short description of the camp and a list of internees (without dates) from Tortoreto Stazione can be found in the book by Costantino Di Sante: *Dall'internamento alla deportazione: I campi di concentramento in Abruzzo (1940-1944)*. See http://www.associazioni.milano.it/aned/libri/di_sante.htm. According to an excerpt from the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, the list is as of September 21, 1940.



Alois Gogg and Max Balter in the Tortoreto Stazione "campo di concentramento" (1941)

The internees at this camp were almost all German and Austrian Jews. Documents from this time bear witness to the bonds of friendship between Max Balter and

Walter Frankl, and to some other refugees, including Alois Gogg,⁸ Saul Steinberg,⁹ and Emil Bahsel,¹⁰ whose paths were soon to separate.

In October 1941, Walter Frankl was transferred to the Castelnuovo di Garfagnana camp, a "family camp" with "free internment", where he was finally able to be together again with his wife, who had struggled to survive since his arrest in Milan. As in Tortoreto, he also spent a lot of time in Castelnuovo making vedute drawings, some of which are still in private hands and in various collections. When the Germans occupied Italy after the fall of Mussolini, Else and Walter Frankl were apparently no longer able to escape from the National Socialists. In December 1943, they were first transferred to a camp in Bagni di Lucca and from there they were deported to Auschwitz via Milan in January 1944. As a forced laborer in a coal mine of the Janina subcamp, Walter Frankl—like his wife—did not survive the Holocaust.

⁸ Alois Gogg was a violinist and conductor who had been expelled from Graz, who apparently delighted the inmates with his music and also gave violin lessons to some (such as Max Balter). In June 1941, Alois Gogg was able to emigrate to the USA, via Portugal, with the help of a Jewish group from Sweden, whereupon he volunteered for the US Army and changed his name to Milton Franklin Weber. After the war, Milton Weber became professor of violin and music theory at Carroll College, a private university in Waukesha, Wisconsin, where he founded and directed the Waukesha Symphony Orchestra. From 1957, he was also head of the "Music for Youth" project in Milwaukee and, after receiving an honorary doctorate from Carroll College in 1962, was appointed professor for "Advanced Conducting" at the Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Wisconsin.

As a result of the divorce from his first wife and then remarrying, Weber retired from all of his functions in Wisconsin in 1966, and moved to Nevada. However, in 1967 he was appointed professor of "Advanced Conducting" at the College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University in Chicago. He could no longer follow his appointment as director of the Kenosha Symphony Orchestra and died in 1968 shortly before the inaugural concert. We are grateful to Milton Weber's widow and daughter for this information about him and for the photo in the text.

⁹ Saul Steinberg, who came from Romania and had been in Italy since 1933 to study architecture, was also a common prisoner and comrade for a while. He was able to emigrate at the same time as Alois Gogg in June 1941, but had to bridge some time in Santo Domingo before he (in the second attempt) received an entry permit for the USA in July 1942. Saul Steinberg soon became one of the most important draftsmen and cartoonists of the post-war period.

¹⁰ Emil Bahsel, a merchant from Vienna, met Balter in Tortoreto and then spent some time with him in the Santa Maria al Bagno camp before Bahsel decided to repatriate in August 1945 and returned to Vienna.

Max Balter was interned in Tortoreto until the camp was closed in the summer of 1943, when he was transferred to the more severe Istonio Marina camp, today's Vasto, in the province of Chieti, also in the Abruzzo region.¹¹ Apparently, he succeeded in escaping to the mountains around September 1943, narrowly evading the approaching German Army. His cousin Myriam Redi recalled that Max's acting skills came into play at this time, as he impersonated an Italian peasant to avoid detection. After some close encounters with the Germans, during which he was shot at and bombed, in his own words, he managed to flee to the side of the Allies. In any case, by the winter of 1944 he was at the UNRRA camp (IT 34) for displaced persons in Santa Maria al Bagno in Apulia. In March 1947, after almost three years of waiting for an opportunity to emigrate to the USA or Switzerland (initially he adamantly refused to be repatriated), he was transferred to another UNRRA camp (IT 197), this time in Palese, near Bari. Finally, at the end of 1947, he was moved to a DP camp of the IRO (the successor organization to UNRRA) at Cinecittà, Rome.¹²

With no hope of being able to enter the United States soon, Balter accepted the Goodyear permit offered by his sister Sylvia's employer in Birmingham and traveled to England on April 20, 1948. He lived with his sister in Wolverhampton, but could not settle in England. Because of the soul-destroying and physically demanding work in the storeroom at the Goodyear tyre factory, he briefly considered returning to Italy or even to Austria.¹³

¹¹ In the course of the liquidation of the Tortoreto camp, the prisoners were transferred to other camps. According to information from the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* in Rome, Balter was taken with other prisoners from Tortoreto to the camp at Istonio Marina on June 28, 1943. This camp was originally used for Italian political prisoners, but only a few months before its closure, it was also used to intern other "public enemies" (useful information can be found at https://www.vastospa.it/html/la_citta/st_campi_concentr_abruzzo.htm, several inmates, Max among them it seems, managed to flee in early September 1943, just before the German Army arrived. Many of the escapees joined local groups resisting the German occupation, until the Allies were able to liberate Abruzzo in June 1944).

¹² In his letter to Viktor Frankl dated March 3, 1946, Balter briefly mentions his escape to the mountains and pursuit by the Nazis: "I already knew that you survived Theresienstadt (from a list in the camp). What it means to survive a German camp—to have survived this Hitler earthquake—I also know—I have six years of experience—some of them life threatening (prison in Milano, 3 camps, flight into the mountains, running away from German troops—being shot at—stopped—questioned and then let go, bombings, malaria etc., etc.). My dear Vikerl, when I first emigrated I was in Milano (1939), then 2 weeks in prison in San Vittore, then in the camps at Campagna and Tortoreto with your brother and my dear friend Walter, but I don't want to write about certain events until I receive an answer to this letter." (English translation by Susannah Gadd). The information about Max's stays in the DP (Displaced Person) camps can be found in the letters of April 23, 1946 and March 10, 1947 as well as in a postcard from December 22, 1947.

¹³ In his letters to Viktor Frankl of June 20, 1948 and July 19, 1948, Balter explains the reasons for his decision to emigrate to England and reports on the necessary "willpower (...) to switch to such a sober profession and, moreover, in a climate and country that so much lacks the romantic, cheerful elements of wonderful sunny Italy". His inner conflicts between "wanting" and "having to" are also discussed, which would later lead to acute psychological and physical complaints, which he saw only one way to cure: "The best type of treatment would of course be to change, as quickly as possible, the job that makes me so unhappy that I have already thought of returning to Italy or Vienna, where I might find employment, if not in my previous acting profession, at least in an intellectual activity such as a newspaper, radio, or as an interpreter for an Allied office—since I have a fairly good command of written and spoken English" (Letter dated May 8, 1949).

With no prospect of suitable work in England, Italy or Austria, Max Balter emigrated to the USA at the beginning of July 1950. By this time, he was already struggling with psychosomatic symptoms caused by anxiety and depression. His two sisters were worried, even at this stage, that he may commit suicide.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he settled in Manhattan, New York, found a job with a shipping company and, in 1956, he married Elise (Liesl) Zirkl, a former secretary at the Nuremberg Trial. Sadly, however, he committed suicide on 23rd April 1960, at the age of 54.¹⁵ It appears he was never able to overcome the experiences of the Nazi era and the loss of his career in acting and journalism. It is possible that he may also have suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as a result of his life-threatening encounters with the German army in 1943-44, and the loss of his close friend Walter Frankl at Auschwitz (1944).

The situation in Italy and the "Campi di concentramento"

After 1933, Italy had admitted a considerable number of Jews from the area under National Socialism and tolerated them within its borders when the war began, although anti-Semitic racial laws had also been in force here since autumn 1938. The internment in the so-called "Campi di concentramento" signified an intensification of the persecution directed against them.

A total of around 40 mostly small internment camps (with around 50 to a maximum of 1,500 people) for foreigners were set up. These "Campi di concentramento" were not comparable to the National Socialist concentration camps. The living conditions there were harsh and full of privation, but there was only occasional abuse. Medical care was guaranteed and the mortality rate did not exceed that of the local population. If the internees could not support themselves, they were granted a limited daily allowance, as well as limited freedom to come and go and permission to practice their religious traditions.

Emigration from Italy was still possible from these camps, until the German occupation in 1943, but the decisive obstacle—also due to the war—was the difficulty of finding a host country.

The attitude of the Italian civilian population towards the Jews differed significantly from that in Nazi Germany and Austria. In spite of anti-Semitic propaganda, Anti-Semitism and xenophobia hardly existed, and the population was almost always benevolent towards the Jewish refugees.¹⁶

As long as Italy retained its sovereignty, the Jews were spared deportations to death camps. It was only during the German occupation following the fall of Mussolini (in July 1943) that the

¹⁴ This is apparent in a letter from Sidonie to Sylvia on 7th August 1950: "I was so glad to hear that Max arrived safely in N.Y. which is a good thing; I always was afraid he might collapse on the boat and certainly his nerves aren't giving him away and he still has a certain amount of willpower to live. So far so good and really maybe he will improve when all by himself—first to get on his feet. The main thing was really that he landed alive! I sometimes had dark doubts, that in his despair he might do harm to himself, or throw himself into the sea. Really according to what you wrote about him, I was scared about him".

¹⁵ The date of immigration to the USA is taken from an entry in New York's passenger lists (see www.ancestry.com).

¹⁶ However, Jews in South Tyrol were confronted with anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic excesses. See: Cinzia Villani: *Zwischen Rassengesetzen und Deportation. Juden in Südtirol, im Trentino und in der Provinz Belluno 1933-1945*, Innsbruck 2003.

systematic annihilation of Jews was extended to Italy as well. There was even an extermination camp in Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste.¹⁷

Viennese Jews

In her book *The Jews of Vienna 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity*, Marsha L. Rozenblit concludes “After the First World War, the Jewish Community of Vienna grew to over 200,000. At the same time antisemitism flourished in the First Austrian Republic. Demands to remove the Jews became especially shrill after the rise of Hitler to power in Germany in 1933 and the installation of a right-wing government in Austria in 1934. Austrian antisemites may have been even more vicious toward the Jews in the 1930s than were their counterparts in Germany. After the *Anschluss* (union) of Austria with Nazi Germany in 1938, Viennese Jews scrambled to leave Austria and S.S. Colonel Adolf Eichmann, in charge of “emigration” matters, eagerly assisted them. Those who failed to get visas were deported to the death camps during World War II. Austria became virtually *Judenrein*, but antisemites continued to denounce and attack the nonexistent Jews in postwar Austria.”

“The success of the Nazis and the end of Austrian Jewry should not obscure the positive achievements of nineteenth-century Viennese Jews. They tried to forge a Jewish and European identity, and sincerely believed that they could do so. The conditions in Austria may not have been conducive to such an identity, but they had no way of knowing that. Moreover, whether the antisemites accepted them or not, the Jews of late Habsburg Vienna were in fact Austro-Germans who held fast to their sense of belonging to the Jewish people”.¹⁸

Yochanan (John) Ben-Daniel,
(Sidonie Balter’s grandson)
Jerusalem, Israel
May, 2021¹⁹

¹⁷ For the situation in Italy see: “*Zwischenwelt*”—*Zeitschrift für Kultur des Exils und des Widerstands*, vol. 22 (2005), nos. 1/2 and 3, both of which focus on exile in Italy from an Austrian perspective. In volume 1/2 there is an excellent summary by Klaus Voigt on the exile of Austrians in Italy 1938-1945. In addition, see his extensive standard work: *Zuflucht auf Widerruf. Exil in Italien 1933–1945*. 2 vols., Stuttgart 1989/1993 and Claus-Dieter Krohn (ed.): *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*, Darmstadt 1998.

¹⁸ Quoted from Marsha L. Rozenblit’s book *The Jews of Vienna 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983; 196.

¹⁹ PS: The following article published by the London Times’ columnist Melanie Phillips on May 21st, 2021, highlights the continuing relevance of the Shoah for Jews everywhere, but especially in Israel:
https://melaniephillips.substack.com/p/the-last-overlooked-but-still-active?token=eyJ1c2VyX2lkjoxNDc5ODEwNywicG9zdF9pZCI6MzY2NzUxMjU1I8iOiJYeGNXQiisImhhdCI6MTYyMTc2NDg0MywiZXhwIjoxNjlxNzY4NDQzLCJpc3MiOiJwdWltNzc2NTUjLCJzdWliOiJwb3N0LXJlYWN0aW9uIn0.ZnOrQaZmindCc9GD-XDaCM3_-JAqKuLJhqmV1NN8C-o