

**The Austrian Myth:
Victimization and Nationalism in the Post-War Period**

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Abstract

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The words of the Moscow Declaration of 1943 allowed Austria to claim itself as a victim of Hitler, rather than a contributor to the Nazis in WWII. In the years following the war, this distinction would define the attitude of Austrians towards their role in war, despite the stark statistics of Austrian support for the Nazi cause. The victim status allowed society to develop taboos and an alternative collective memory of history. This memory was embodied in monuments and museums dedicated to the war. Additionally, a sort of social amnesia for the years between 1938 and 1945 was constructed.

More or less, this silence continued until the election of Kurt Waldheim as the President of Austria in 1986. The former UN Secretary General's campaign for the presidency led to the discovery of his actual wartime past by members of the World Jewish Congress. Despite the discovery that Waldheim had been a member of the SA and was involved in atrocities in Greece during WWII, the Austrian people rejected the international cry to vote against the former Nazi and elected Waldheim as their president.

Jörg Haider, the governor of Carinthia and leader of the Austrian Freedom Party (the Austrian far right party), was also faced with allegations of Nazi sympathies and anti-Semitism in the 80s but continued to gain popularity, especially in the youth vote. The Freedom Party is one of the strongest far right parties in Europe and currently holds a quarter of the votes in Austria.

While the history of post-war Austria remains linked to the actions of Germany during the Second World War, the way in which the two societies dealt with the guilt of their part in the war separates the legacy of the war in Austria from that in Germany. The taboos and strict omission of conversation about Austria's role let the people avoid any confrontation with their guilt. This was not an option in Germany. This thesis will address the manipulation of memory in developing a national myth. The author will draw a correlation between the Moscow Declaration and the popularity of the far right thought in Austria today.

Additionally, this thesis will conclude that the use of a national myth in dealing with an unfavorable role in an historical event is not unique. The author will examine the use of the omission of certain historical events in youth education as a tool for developing nationalism.


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List of Acronyms

Alliance for the Future of Austria	Bündnis Zukunft Österreich	BZÖ
Austrian People's Party	Österreichische Volkspartei	ÖVP
Communist Party of Austria	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs	KPÖ
Defense Corps	Schutzstaffel	SS
European Union		EU
Federation of Independents	Verband der Unabhängigen	VdU
Freedom Party of Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	FPÖ
League of German Maidens	Bund Deutscher Mädel	BDM
North Atlantic Treaty Organization		NATO
Revolutionary Socialists		RS
Social Democratic Party of Austria	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	SPÖ
Storm troopers	Sturmabteilung	SA
United Nations		UN
World Jewish Congress		WJC
Youth Wing of the FPÖ	Ring Freiheitlicher Jugend Österreich	RFJ

I have come to appreciate the frailty of memory. I shall never aspire to the excellence of Mark Twain, whose memory in his youth was reputed to be so good that he could even recall things that never happened. However, with the help of all those named above and many others unnamed, I trust that I have been able to recall the most important things that did happen.

*-Kurt Waldheim
'Into to the Eye of the Storm: A Memoir'*

Introduction

In 1938, Hitler entered Austria and changed the country forever. The German National Socialist Party's regime marked one of the most significant and deadly periods in Austrian history. Acting under the rule of the German state, the Austrian military was integrated into the Wehrmacht and forty percent of the Austrian male population fought by the side of their German-speaking counterparts.¹ In a war that would shape Austria's national identity, the people were anything but by-standers. The next seven years would see an overrepresentation of Austrians in both war crimes and resistance efforts against the Nazi Party.²

The Moscow Declaration of October 30, 1943 became the basis for the Austrian narration that continues to this day. The inclusion by the Allied countries of the pronouncement of Austria to be "the first free country to fall victim to Hitlerite aggression" allowed the German-speaking country with a sound opportunity to distance itself from Germany and the scourge of the war.³ The account of Austria's role as a victim of the war would continue for years to come, largely unquestioned in the Austrian public sphere.

In the years following WWII, strict laws were invoked in the Second Republic of Austria banning any Nazi glorification or Holocaust denial. In addition, the Austrians did

all they could to promote the idea of Austrian victimization on the international stage, in order to avoid war reparations and to maintain a sound reputation. The taboos and laws provided an excuse for the avoidance of all discussion on the true role of Austria in the war. Monuments and educational lectures were developed, carefully depicting Austria as a country liberated from fascism and Germany's hold. All Austrians, including both those who had supported National Socialism and those against the regime, worked towards reestablishing a national government. In 1955 the Christian Conservative (ÖVP)—Social Democrat (SPÖ) (the two major political parties) coalition was reinstated in Vienna, in the name of national identity and pursuance of international recognition for the Second Republic.

It was not until the election of 1986 that the role of Austria in WWII was again brought to the forefront of Austrian politics. Four decades of strict disregard for the time period produced substantial resistance to the resurrection of the topic. Kurt Waldheim, the former General Secretary of the United Nations, gained international attention in his election for the presidency of Austria when the World Jewish Congress discovered his wartime position in the Sturmabteilung (SA), a fact omitted in his memoir. The discovery reopened old wounds for many Austrians, and led to anti-Semitic slurs in both the Austrian media and Waldheim's campaign. Although the United States strongly urged Austria to vote against the former-Nazi, and even placed Waldheim on the US Watch List (banning him from entering the United States), Austria voted Waldheim into the presidency.

The Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) (Freedom Party of Austria), a successor of the Verband der Unabhängigen (VdU), was founded in Vienna in 1956 as a right-wing populist political party. Born out of the national-liberal third party of the VdU, the FPÖ was commonly backed by former members of the Nazi Party in Austria. Although only modestly supported for several decades, the party began to steadily accumulate backing after Jörg Haider was named the leader of the party in 1986. Haider had gained national political clout through his career as the Governor of Carinthia.⁴ His popularity would lead the FPÖ into office, much to the apprehension of the international community, spurring talk of renewed fascism and sanctions by the United Nations.

During the filming of the world renowned 'Sound of Music' (1965) in Salzburg, Austrian residents and local government griped and protested. When a scene in the film required the city to be shown with large flags bearing the swastika of the National Socialist Party hanging from the buildings of the Altstadt (the old city), the Austrians drew the line. Given the laws against swastikas and any sort of Nazi memorabilia in the country, as well as a desire to protect their reputation as an innocent victim of Hitler, the directors were told that this scene could not be filmed. In response, the Hollywood leadership told the Austrian authorities that instead of recreating the scene, they could simply input real film from the Anschluß in 1938, which revealed thousands of Austrians greeting Hitler enthusiastically. The Austrians allowed the movie producers to hang the flags and continue filming.⁵

Austria's history has been complex and often intertwined with neighboring Germany. In the European Union however, the neutral country exists as an independent,

prosperous Western nation. Austria has physically recovered from the destruction of the Second World War. Although the shadow of fascism has long been lifted from Austria, political remnants linger. Key figures like Kurt Waldheim and Jörg Haider have repeatedly shown that Austrians have never fully dealt with their past and their role in WWII. With a new generation now in adulthood, the status quo is being questioned and challenged. Yet, popularity for far right policies remains strong, even among the youth. Because Austria was never forced to come to terms with its past like Germany, the education of the WWII period and the environment in which the Austrians lived has fostered a culture that allows for prevalent far right thought. Through the study of national monuments and the careful construction of a favorable identity, it can be seen that the national myth of Austria was developed deliberately and systematically. Recent politics, including the success of Jörg Haider, show that these efforts proved successful.

¹ Thaler, Peter. "Germans" "Austrians" in World War II: Military History and National Identity." Thesis. University of Minnesota, 1999. *Department of History*. Sept. 1999. Web. 20 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.cas.umn.edu/assets/pdf/WP991.PDF>>.

² Wally, Stefan. "Austrian Folk Art and Customs." Austria, Salzburg. Spring 2011. Lecture.

³ "The Avalon Project: The Moscow Conference, October 1943." *Avalon Project - Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*. Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Law Library, 3008. Web. 10 Nov. 2011. <<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/moscow.asp>>.

⁴ Sully, Melanie A. *The Haider Phenomenon*. [Boulder]: East European Monographs, 1997. Print.

⁵ Bischof, Günter, Fritz Plasser, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx. *New Perspectives on Austrians and World War II*. Vol. 187. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. Print.

Chapter One: The Rise of Nationalism and Austria's Role in World War II

Austria was never involved in the Second World War, Germany was. The Nazis were not in Austria, the Nazis were in Germany.

*-Kurt Waldheim¹
Austrian Presidential Campaign (1986)*

The popularity of nationalism began to rise in Austria in the early 1890s. Kurt Lueger founded the Christian Social Party in 1889 on the bases of improving the lot for the “little man”, political anti-Semitism, and a Greater Austria (themes that have since been revisited in Austria’s history).² While Lueger lessened his public anti-Semitic attitude upon entering office as the mayor of Vienna in 1897, he continued to use it, when necessary, to his electoral advantage. Like the FPÖ several decades later, the Christian Social Party was distinguished not by what they believed in, but rather by what they did not: the Christian Social Party (like the later-developed Nazi Party) was, self-proclaimed, “anti-liberal, anti-Jewish, anti-Marxist, and anti-capitalist.”³ The Liberal Party, opposed to the Christian Social Party, further brought the popularity of nationalism to Austria. Although not anti-Semitic before the 1900s, the liberal party was both nationalistic and anti-Semitic after the turn of the century.

The success of the Christian Social Party also spurred the countermovement of the Social Democratic Party, led by Victor Adler. The three parties’ constant confrontations brought political processes to a standstill in 1933. Due to a statute within the constitution

of the First Austrian Republic, a party would hold the majority in parliament if the president were not a member of their party. Consequently, the Conservative president of parliament stepped down in an attempt to give the Conservative Party the majority (and thus, more power). The Socialists, now holding the presidency, followed suit and the presidential figure stepped down. The Liberal Party acted similarly. With no president left standing, the parliament had lost its leadership. Essentially, the Austrian government had abolished all power in incessant, selfish attempts to gain more power for their respective parties. Struggling to regain stability, Austrians looked outward for ideas to restructure their political system. The success of both Benito Mussolini in Italy and Adolf Hitler in Germany inspired Austrian leadership to change the constitution: parliament was dismissed and a dictatorship was established with the conservative Engelbert Dollfuss at the head of the government. The Catholic Church served as the backbone of the regime, in addition to providing the organizational model. The Catholic, Austro-fascist dictatorship was intentionally fashioned after the Italian fascist government: trade unions were made illegal, compulsory youth education was instituted, and those in opposition to the government were jailed. Socialist and German Nationalists (Nazis) were among those imprisoned in an effort to strengthen the Austrian dictatorship, inciting the socialist revolt of 1934. The one-day Austrian civil war, in which the Socialist militia took up arms against the Conservative police and military, was the last organized attempt to reestablish democracy in the nation. The Socialist opposition was quickly beaten and the fighting ended. Thus, the context in which Austria found itself when Hitler entered in March 1938 was set: the dictatorship in power was strongly,

though clandestinely, opposed by (illegal) Socialists, Nazis, and the quickly growing population of unemployed workers.⁴

Throughout the history of Austria, there had never been a time period in which Austria, as an independent state, existed voluntarily and prosperously on its own. The 1919 dissolution of the German Austrian state by the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye left a large proportion of the Austrian population angry, claiming that the treaty violated the right to self-determination of all nations, as identified in Wilson's *Fourteen Points*. The state struggled with self-identity, as it was not a voluntary independent nation. It would not be until the 1970's that more than half of the Austrian population would identify themselves as 'Austrians.' Essentially, Austria existed in a several hundred yearlong identity crisis. During the Hapsburg Monarchy, loyalties had first been tied to the ruling family, not to the land or the state. After the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the state of Austria was left with a very small amount of land, with few industrial or agricultural advantages to continue in their position as a world power. Further, given the historical disparities of different regions of Austria (e.g. Salzburg was not annexed into Austria until 1805), there was no joint chronicle or tradition for Austrians to grasp onto as a source of identity. Austrians instinctively looked outward to gain more land (and thus, influence). Their desire to rejoin their German-speaking counterparts remained strong and ultimately played a role in their union with Germany in 1938. Austria had never been a voluntary nation. Instead, their country had been parceled and forced into statehood by wars. Without a strong source of national identity, there was not a large enough movement of national pride or stamina to fight back from joining a world power.

Hitler announced that there was to be an Anschluß between Germany and Austria in 1938. While a portion of the Austrian Social Democratic Party had supported the idea of reunification with Germany as an opportunity to reinstate the identity of international prominence since 1919 not all those in support of a German-Austrian reunification were in favor of a union under Hitler's authoritarian rule.⁵ In 1938, Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg agreed to a greater Nazi presence within Austria after receiving increased pressure from Hitler at a meeting in Berchtesgaden. A member of the Austrian Nazi Party was appointed minister of police and all Nazi prisoners were granted amnesty, steps taken to attempt to reduce the chances of a German invasion. Upon Hitler's insistence of German troops in Austria, Schuschnigg demanded a referendum by the Austrian people on Germany's influence in internal affairs. However, due to the growing Austrian pro-Nazi, right wing party and Hitler's ability to manipulate Austrian officials, the vote was canceled and Schuschnigg resigned.⁶

A fake plea for German assistance initiated by a German agent within the Austrian government sent German troops into Austria on March 12, 1938, compelling a plebiscite on April 10 by the Austrian people.⁷ While the vote resulted in a 99.7% approval for the unification of Austria and Germany, it is regarded as faux and not a factual representative of the Austrian opinion. Kurt Waldheim, in his book *The Austrian Example*, accounts for such a result:

A plebiscite held on the fait accompli of the annexation on 10 April 1938 was not fully secret and was certainly not in line with democratic procedure...The rest of the population, the 'silent majority', expressed no opinion. This was due less to the presence of the German Wehrmacht than to the prompt intervention of the Gestapo, which had arrived in Vienna

even before the military occupation and had immediately begun its fateful activities throughout Austria.⁸

Austrian Jews and Roma and Sinti were not allowed to vote on the matter.⁹ Regardless of the validity of Waldheim's description of the accuracy of the plebiscite, the videos recorded during the Anschluss that depict hundreds of Austrians welcoming Hitler's entrance into Austria with the Hitlergruß (Hitler salute) and cheers are not erroneous. A significant portion of the Austrian population welcomed the Anschluss enthusiastically, pleased with Hitler's promise of full employment. The enthusiasm that greeted Hitler and paved the way for the rise of the Austrian Nazi Party is unsurprising, given the percentage that joined the National Socialist Party was greater in Austria than it was in Germany. The popularity of the party's platforms cumulated in widespread anti-Semitic vandalism and violence, as resistance to the Nazi Party was essentially publically eliminated.¹⁰ Regardless of the inaccuracy of the plebiscite, Austrian support for Hitler and the Nazi Party was shown through both enthusiasm and the large number that joined the party.

Within twenty-four hours of the Germans entering Austria, the Gestapo, police and other Nazi paramilitary organizations arrested more than 70,000 Austrians. These people were mainly identified from the files kept by the Austrian police prior to the Anschluss. The Nazis confiscated the files and were easily able to identify political opponents to the Nazi Party, mainly Socialists, Communists, and members of the Catholic youth.¹¹

In the months and years following the unification of the two German-speaking countries under Hitler's control, Austria did not play a passive role in the campaign against the Jews. In fact, the Austrian 'aryanization' became a model for all areas of Europe under National Socialist rule. Instead of following Germany's direction, Austria set the standard. According to Stephan Templ (author of *Unser Wien*), "The Austrians did in six months, from March to September 1938, what the Germans didn't do in six years."¹² Defining the standard for anti-Semitic behavior developed into a reality when the Austrians became the first to systematically loot Jewish property. They began this action in Vienna, before the National Socialist government had even set procedures for dealing with the Jewish population. The infamous Kristallnacht ("Night of Broken Glass") in November 1938 epitomized the brutality of the Austrian initiatives against their Jewish citizens. The majority of the synagogues in Vienna were burned and destroyed, Jewish businesses were vandalized and plundered, and thousands of Jews were arrested and deported to the Dachau or Buchenwald concentration camps. Between 1938 and 1940, 117,000 Jews emigrated from Austria.¹³

It has been suggested that cruelty is a human instinct. Perhaps this played a role in the massive movement against the Jewish population in Germany and Austria. However, this may also not be the full explanation or even the case at all. Regardless of the one's perception of whether man is inherently good or evil, one can argue that man is rational. In the case of the Austrian support for (or negligence to resist) state-led anti-Semitism, one can contrive a rational explanation for the progressive steps taken by society towards these sentiments (although this says nothing of the ignorance or injustice of it). For

example, a non-Jewish professor looking for a job at a local university benefits from the laying-off of Jewish professors there because of the resulting job openings. In this hypothetical situation, the professor is likely to accept a now-available job and step out of unemployment rather than reject the job and question the actions of the state. Rationality pushes him towards the need for an income for food, shelter, and his wellbeing, especially in a situation of high unemployment. While he may not be anti-Semitic himself, it is in his self-interest not to go against the powerful state that has proven its ability to keep certain individuals in unemployment. Similarly, a shopkeeper benefits from less competition if a state mandate closes Jewish-run shops. The shopkeeper obtains the business of the Jewish shops' customers and earns a higher income because of it. Several Austrians literally profited from anti-Semitism. There was a natural economic interest in not resisting the new laws¹⁴. Further, if the system fails (i.e. the Nazi Party no longer holds power), those who went along with the laws and took the jobs of the Jewish citizens after they were denied them look criminal (or at least anti-Semitic). Therefore it is in one's interest to continue to support the party whose policies have so far benefited him. This explanation says nothing for the fear of the government likely present in a fascist state nor does it offer justification for the violence displayed toward the Jewish citizens.

After the Anschluß, the Austrian army was integrated into the German Wehrmacht. This was a remarkably smooth process for three main reasons, according to Richard German (author of *Austrian Soldiers and Generals in World War II*). First, most of the Austrians in the army were obliged to be part of the Wehrmacht and recognized it

as their new army without hesitation. The initiation into the military of a major world power was too much for many to resist. Additionally, the soldiers understood the language and the opportunity to adopt the German identity was ideal for an Austrian who had been struggling with his for centuries. Second, only those Austrian officers who the Germans considered acceptable were kept. Thus, any resistance to the German initiatives was immediately eliminated. Third, Austrian soldiers were predominantly placed in the ostmärkische divisions of the Wehrmacht in Austria proper. Allowing the soldiers, in divisions made up mostly of their former countrymen, to remain fighting in their homeland meant that they were not separated from friends and family.¹⁵ The Austrian soldiers played a large role in the annexation of the Sudetenland (1938) and the occupation of Czechoslovakia (1939). In total, more than 1.3 million Austrians were drafted (the majority voluntarily) into the Wehrmacht between 1938 and 1945 or about 40.5 percent of the male population in 1939. 242,000 Austrians lost their lives in the war.¹⁶

Although not to be reflected in national memory, the Austrian people played a disproportionate role in the atrocities of WWII.¹⁷ Austrians were disproportionately represented in the number of war criminals. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the second highest ranking SS officer, Adolf Eichmann, the organizer of the “final solution,”¹ Odio Globocnik, the architect behind “Operation Reinhard,”² and Franz Stangl, the commander

¹ The Final Solution was the execution of a systematic genocide of European Jews.

² Operation Reinhard was the most deadly phase of the Holocaust, using extermination camps to murder Polish Jews. 1.9 to 2.2 million Jews were killed in the operation.

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of the Sobibor and Treblinka extermination camps were all Austrian.¹⁸ Approximately 150,000 Austrians were part of the Waffen SS.¹⁹ Additionally, the commanders of the concentration camps across Europe were often Austrian.²⁰ Austrian troops were reportedly much more hierarchical than the troops consisting of only Germans. In the conservative tradition, the hierarchical nature of Austrians can be seen as a cultural effect (the conservative, Catholic tradition remained stronger in southern Germany and Austria than in northern Germany after the Counter-Reformation).²¹ However, because Austria did not technically exist after it was annexed by Germany, historical statements common in Austrian textbooks that claim that Austria was not involved in WWII are permissible (at least in the eyes of some Austrians). Technically, Austria was nonexistent and all of the people that lived in the region were German.

The leading players in the Austrian resistance against National Socialism were the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) and the Communist Party (KPÖ). The two groups, which made up the bulk of the organized labor community, had engaged in a four-year, underground struggle against the Dollfuss regime prior to the Anschluss. While the groups differed on their view of a post-Nazi Austria, they agreed on the central issue that Austria must be reconstructed as an independent, free and democratic country (thereby exhibiting one of the first expressions of the Austrian identity in the country's history).²²

The Revolutionary Socialists (mostly consisting of members of the Social Democratic Party) feared the extreme repressive measures that the Gestapo took against acts of resistance. The violence associated with these measures were much more severe than those taken by the Austrian-fascist dictatorship of Dollfuss. Because of the growing

anxiety among members, the group effectively ended all organized resistance activity. The leaders of the group argued that even small operations to express opposition were both futile and perilous.²³ In contrast, the KPÖ continued activity, absorbing the members of the RS who did not agree with the halted activity of their party. The ranks of the KPÖ continued to expand under National Socialism, with a high percentage of young members. Because of their work during the Dollfuss regime, the KPÖ members were well practiced in the covert operations. They focused their energies on recruitment, dissemination of illegal propaganda, and collecting contributions for a relief fund. The majority of this activity took place on factory floors and in bars, shops, markets, and trams.²⁴

One of the foremost means of resistance by the group was originating and spreading rumors about the Nazi regime. These included reports of the mistreatment of Jews, internal party issues, and disagreements within government. As a benefit to the KPÖ, most of these reports were more or less true, without much added creativity necessary from the KPÖ members. Relief organizations were also used. The Rote Hilfe (the KPÖ's relief group) raised money to provide financial help to people with imprisoned or executed family members. However, the engagement in contributing to a relief organization was punished by the Nazis with charges of membership in a subversive organization involved in high treason.²⁵

In sum, resistance acts of the Austrian society against the Nazis began prevalently in the spring of 1938, quickly diminishing into little to no evidence of activity by that summer. The Gestapo had gained control of the previous Austrian government's files on

all members of opposition, thus being aware and able to monitor known communist and socialist activities. For most, the price of punishment was too high. The Nazis engaged in seizing printed materials by the KPÖ, interrogating known members, and often successfully infiltrating the group with spies. As time under National Socialist rule went on, it became clear that “all attempts at collective political or industrial action were bound to be stillborn.”²⁶

The Moscow Declaration of November 1, 1943, issued by the Soviet Union, the United States, and Great Britain was the first document to declare Austria “the first free country to fall victim to Hitlerite aggression”, thus enabling Austria to take on the victim status as their historical narrative and avoid reparations for the war. The declaration marked a major difference in the German and Austrian history of WWII. In recognizing that Austria was annexed by Germany, instead of acknowledging the highly enthusiastic welcoming of Hitler into Austria, the large percentage of Austrian participation in the Nazi Party, or the Austrian involvement in war crimes and violence against Jews, the Allies defined Austria’s role as a victim. However, while the first part of the declaration regarding Austria was to be frequently repeated and used as a basis for the treatment of Austria after the war, the last sentence of the section on Austria has been ignored in most Austrian history books:

Austria is reminded, however, that she has responsibility which she cannot evade for participation in the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably to be taken of her own contribution to her liberation.²⁷

On April 13, 1945 the Soviets captured Vienna, thus ending Germany’s occupation of Austria. To the Austrians, this became known as ‘liberation’, instead of

defeat. When it became clear that the Axis powers would be conquered, as the Allies moved in to capture Germany, several prominent Austrians quickly began to use the language of the Moscow Declaration, declaring Austria a separate country from Germany, claiming innocence and victimization.²⁸ The mantra became “Austrians, but no Austria”, in an attempt to promote the idea of Austrian resistance to German takeover in the retention of the label ‘Austrian,’ while at the same time excluding Austrians from punishment for the war because their country did not exist at the time. Thus, this mantra endeavored to exclude Austria from blame of crimes committed by the Nazi regime during the war because no Austrian government existed at the time.²⁹ Because of these efforts, along with the declaration signed two years prior by the Allied powers, Austria was treated much less harshly than Germany following the war. Again, the Austrians did not protest when a foreign country entered their country to occupy it. However, unlike Hitler’s entrance eight years earlier, there was no celebration when the Soviets entered in 1945.

¹ Rosenbaum, Eli M., and William Hoffer. *Betrayal: The Untold Story of the Kurt Waldheim Investigation and Cover-Up*. New York: St. Martin's, 1993. Print.

² Heilbrunn, Jacob. "A Disdain for the Past, Jorg Haider's Austria." *World Policy Journal* Spring 17.1 (2000): 71-78. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011.

<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=a+disdain+for+the+past+jorg+haider%27s+austria&gw=jtx&acc=on&prq=a+disdain+for+the+past&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on>>.

³ Heilbrunn, 73.

⁴ Wally, Stefan. "Austrian Folk Art and Customs." Austria, Salzburg. Spring 2011. Lecture.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Hitler Announces an Anschluss with Austria — History.com This Day in History — 3/12/1938." *History.com*. Web. 28 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/hitler-announces-an-anschluss-with-austria>>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Waldheim, Kurt. *The Austrian Example*. New York: Macmillan, 1973. Print.

⁹ "Austria." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Web. 29 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005447>>.

¹⁰ Donahue, William Collins. "Bless My Homeland Forever": Teaching Austria and the Holocaust." *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* Autumn 29.2 (1996): 188-200. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=bless+my+homeland+forever&g w=jtx&acc=on&prq=memory+AND+globalization+austria%27s&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on>>.

¹¹ Steiner, Herbert. "The Role of the Resistance in Austria, with Special Reference to the Labor Movement." *JSTOR*. The Journal of Modern History, Dec. 1992. Web. 14 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/stable/2124973?seq=2>>.

¹² Erlanger, Steven. "Vienna Skewered as a Nazi-Era Pillager of Its Jews - New York Times." *The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia*. 7 Mar. 2002. Web. 22 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/07/world/vienna-skewered-as-a-nazi-era-pillager-of-its-jews.html?ref=jorghaider>>.

¹³ "Austria." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Web. 29 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005447>>.

¹⁴ Wally, Stefan

¹⁵ Bischof, Günter, Fritz Plasser, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx. *New Perspectives on Austrians and World War II*. Vol. 17. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009. Print.

¹⁶ Bischof, Günter, Fritz Plasser, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 29.

¹⁷ Rosenbaum, Eli M, 11.

¹⁸ Uhl, Heidemarie. "The Politics of Memory: Austria's Perception of the Second World War and the National Socialist Period." *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka. Vol. 5. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997. 64-94. Print.

¹⁹ "Austria - World War II and the Defeat of Nazi Germany." *Austria: A Country Study*. Ed. Eric Solsten. U.S. Library of Congress, 1994. Web. 06 Jan. 2012. <<http://countrystudies.us/austria/41.htm>>.

²⁰ Bischof, Günter, Fritz Plasser, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, 30.

²¹ Wally, Stefan.

²² Steiner, Herbert. "The Role of the Resistance in Austria, with Special Reference to the Labor Movement." *JSTOR*. The Journal of Modern History, Dec. 1992. Web. 14 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/stable/2124973?seq=2>>.

²³ Kirk, Tim. *Nazism and the Working Class in Austria: Industrial Unrest and Political Dissent in the "National Community"* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.

²⁴ Kirk, 51.

²⁵ Kirk, 52.

²⁶ Kirk, 56.

²⁷ "MOSCOW CONFERENCE, October, 1943." *Ibiblio - The Public's Library and Digital Archive*. Web. 03 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1943/431000a.html>>.

²⁸ "Effect of World War II on Each Country." *Worldology*. Web. 03 Jan. 2012. <http://www.worldology.com/Europe/world_war_2_effect.htm>.

²⁹ Uhl, 73.

Chapter Two: The Second Occupation of Austria and the Role of Taboos in Society

You know as well as I do that the Austrian nation was a miscarriage, an ideological miscarriage.

*-Jörg Haider
Austrian Politician (1988)*

Following the Allied ‘liberation’ of Austria in 1945, the Soviets, Americans, French, and British occupied Austria for a decade in an effort to restructure the again-independent state. Austria was divided into four sections: the Soviets occupied Lower Austria, Vienna, and Burgenland, the Americans occupied Upper Austria, and Salzburg, the French occupied Vorarlberg and west Tyrol, and the British occupied Carinthia, Styria, and east Tyrol. These forces reorganized Austria. Institutions were reestablished, including the restoration of parliament and the political parties (dominated by the Social Democrats and the Conservatives). The economy was restructured, with key industries nationalized (e.g. the steel industry in Linz). With high poverty, food was rationed and foreign economic aid became crucial to the rebuilding of the country. The Marshall Plan, cumulatively, gave Austria \$468 million. The help from other nations totaled \$1.6 billion. In 1945 700,000 Allied troops occupied Austria; by 1955, only 60,000 remained.¹ Because of the destruction of Soviet territory during the war, the occupation of the Soviet-controlled areas was much harsher than those occupied by the Western allies.²

With the Cold War looming, the fear of being split down the middle between American and Soviet forces (like East and West Germany) became very real. The Korean

War in 1950, the first indirect confrontation between the East and the West, left Austria in the middle. However, instead of further involving Austria in the Cold War conflicts, the occupying forces agreed to reestablish Austria as a sovereign (non-occupied), and neutral, democratic state. The foreign ministers of the United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France signed the Austrian State Treaty on May 15, 1955 at Belvedere Palace in Vienna. The treaty reinstated Austria's independence and autonomy for the first time in seventeen years. As conditions to Austria's liberation, the Allied powers outlined the following: the rights of Slovene and Croat minorities were to be upheld, Anschluss with Germany was strictly prohibited, National Socialist and fascist organizations were forbidden, and Austria was to be permanently neutral (e.g. Austria was barred from joining NATO).³ During these negotiations, the new Austrian government was able to persuade the Allies to omit the "share of responsibility clause" with Germany in the war (the final sentence of the Moscow Declaration), thereby freeing Austria from paying war reparations and from being ostracized by the international community.⁴

After the war Austria fought hard to construct a version of their national history in which their role in WWII was favorable. In some ways, this can be seen as necessary to the prosperity of the country. The development of a national myth, or a grand narrative, is neither uncommon nor unique to Austria. The Austrians knew that they had to develop some sort of explanation for the years between 1938-1945 to teach their youth, while also developing a sense of pride in being Austrian so that the next generation would not seek to rejoin Germany. The victim theory, summarized here by Heidemarie Uhl, provided the following explanation for the time period:

In March 1938 Austria was occupied and annexed by Germany against its will; it was liberated in April/May 1945 by Austrian resistance fighters and Allies. The years between 1938 and 1945 were described as a period of foreign rule and, as far as Austria's role and participation in the war was concerned, these were portrayed as a period of resistance and persecution, of the nation's fight for its liberation.⁵

The Rot-Weiß-Rot Buch (Red-White-Red Book), published in 1946 by the Austrian government, was the official version of victimhood, a status asserted in the Moscow Declaration. It became national myth. The book was a manifesto for Austrian historians; it covered several aspects of the victim myth as promoted by the Austrian government including Austria's role in WWII, the economic damage suffered by Austria due to the Anschluss (synonymous in this context with annexation, instead of union), and the vital efforts of Austrian resistance in liberating themselves from National Socialism. The book stated, "Her fall – inevitable under the conditions which then reigned—was the bursting of the dike through which the elements of the brown deluge were to pour over the whole of Europe. *This first victim, left in the lurch, by the whole world, was Austria*" (emphasis in the original).⁶ According to the book, the rest of the world neglected the Austrian martyr and it was left to fall.

The story of victimhood was also visible in certain symbols used to represent the Second Republic of Austria. The original Austrian coats of arms, used during the First Republic, depicted an eagle (representing Austria's sovereignty beginning in 1919), with an escutcheon showing the red-white-red of the Austrian flag on the bird's chest, a mural crown (representing the middle class), with a sickle (representing agriculture) and a hammer (representing industry) clasped in the talons of the eagle.⁷ In 1945, a new addition was added to the coat of the arms that still remains today: broken chains around

the eagle's feet, representing liberation from the National Socialist dictatorship (see Figure 1 in Appendix). The use of chains is crucial in representing liberation, instead of defeat, by the Allied forces.

The following decade introduced several standards into Austrian culture for dealing with their role in WWII. First, 'double speak' was instituted in differentiating between international and domestic rhetoric. On the international stage, Austrian officials continually stressed their victimhood, emphasizing resistance movements as offers of proof that Austria was, and had always been, an anti-Nazi state. All Austrians were portrayed as victims: those who suffered in concentration camps, those who were forced to follow orders as soldiers in the German Wehrmacht, women and children who endured a very low standard of life in bomb shelters, and those forced to emigrate from Austria.

In the domestic sphere, however, this victimization rhetoric was much less widespread. Instead, an everyday kind of Nazi nostalgia continued. Statements including "under Hitler this couldn't have happened" and "another Hitler is what's needed" were often heard in Austrian political discourse, despite the illegality of it.⁸ One-third of the country's population had been members of the National Socialist Party. Austrian officials could not place blame on such a large percentage of the population (especially in a democratic system), so the domestic oratory of the Austrian government instead excused Austrians of guilt, telling them that they had only done their duty and had followed the orders that they were forced to obey in order to stay alive.

Political parties moved quickly to garner votes from the 33% of the population that were former Nazis (known as 'Ehemalige') by sympathizing with their plight as

victims of the war. Ignaz Seipel (a highly anti-Semitic former Chancellor) and Leopold Kunschak were both members of the Catholic-Conservative Party. The party now had to account for the men's actions while not alienating them. Similarly, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer were Social Democrats. Nearly everyone in Austria in 1945 belonged to a party. Therefore, a type of gridlock occurred, in which parties could not expose the crimes of the other parties' Nazis without those parties exposing theirs. Some candidates were even able to use the former-Nazis' past allegiance to their advantage. For example, the 1957 SPÖ candidate for President Adolf Scharf campaigned under the slogan "Who once voted for Adolf, vote again for Adolf this year," winning two terms. The majority of former-Nazi voters became part of the League of the Independents Party (VdU, later known as the FPÖ). The VdU was the third camp, founded as a 'democratic harbor for the former National Socialists'. The party held a national populist ideology, tending toward far right policies.

A quintessential example of domestic rhetoric used in an attempt to not alienate Austrian former-Nazis was Walter Reder's reception back into Austria in 1985. Reder was a major in the German SS (Schutzstaffel) during the war. Reder ordered at least 600 Italians to their death in the Marzabotto region of Italy. After being captured in 1948 by British forces, he was sent back to Italy, convicted of war crimes, and condemned to life in an Italian prison. However, Reder's cause was championed by the *Gaeta-Hilfe* aid society. After receiving 280,000 letters by soldiers from thirty-five countries requesting Reder's release and a profound repentance from Reder, the Italian government discharged Reder and he returned to Austria. Defense Minister Friedhelm Frischenschlager greeted

Reder at the airport. Frischenschlager shook Reder's hand and welcomed him back to Austria with full military honors.⁹ The actions by Frischenschlager brought about international disapproval of the Austrian government. Additionally, after arriving in Austria Reder revoked his apology to Italy, claiming that it was simply an exploitation of a political opportunity.

Because of the dichotomy between the Austrians who suffered in the concentration camps and those who also claimed to suffer in their positions as high-ranking officials in the German Wehrmacht, taboos were introduced into the culture that discounted the need to talk about the true role of Austria in the war and the assignment of blame. The Austrians were eager to close the chapter of history. The passing of the laws against any Nazi symbols or rhetoric, as well as any discussion of the fabrication of the Holocaust, gave the Austrians an excuse to not discuss their role in the war.

In considering the necessity and success of taboos as a cultural tool, one must recognize that all historical perceptions are biased and at least slightly subjective. These perceptions fulfill certain societal functions. First, historical perceptions generate mutual respect and acceptance of taboos. As discussed above, all three parties in 1945 (ÖVP, SPÖ, VdU) had former Nazis in their ranks and provable incidents of anti-Semitism and/or approval of Hitler's policies. Out of fear of reciprocation, all parties were pressured to remain silent about the denunciation of National Socialism and Austria's role in the promotion of genocide. Thus, the taboo of any sort of discussion about Austria's part in WWII was set.¹⁰

Second, historical perceptions serve the function of an abandonment of the truth in the name of integration. Because of the ‘double speak’ tactic used in dealing with the international versus domestic public, both former Nazis and members of the Austrian resistance movement were able to assimilate into an Austrian culture that viewed neither side as a perpetrator, but rather both as victims. Using the term ‘liberation’ to describe both the Allied victory in Vienna in 1945 and the State Treaty of 1955, all Austrians were able to rally around the aphorism “Austria is free,” eliminating any need for the dialogue on how Austria became part of Germany or which Austrians played a major role in the Anschluss. Anton Pelinka (author of *Taboos and Self-Deception: The Second Republic’s Reconstruction of History*) describes the phenomenon, “Taboos and self-deceptions have an ambivalent protective function. They cover painful wounds and make healing possible through a ritual banning of contact, especially a banning of discussion.”¹¹ Further, Pelinka asserts that no society can do without taboos. Based on the national myth or grand narrative that a state, ethnicity, or community promotes, there is a prescribed set of taboos that are not addressed or are skewed to put the state’s role in a better light in order to teach the history of the country.¹²

¹ "Occupation of Austria 1945 - 1955 - World War II - Allied Troops - Vienna." *Vienna*. Web. 03 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.wien-vienna.com/occupation.php>>.

² Wally, Stefan. "Austrian Folk Art and Customs." Austria, Salzburg. Spring 2011. Lecture.

³ Ferring, Robert L. "The Austrian State Treaty of 1955 and the Cold War." *JSTOR*. The Western Political Quarterly, Dec. 1968. Web. 3 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.jstor.org/pss/446754>>.

⁴ Uhl, Heidemarie. "The Politics of Memory: Austria's Perception of the Second World War and the National Socialist Period." *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka. Vol. 5. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997. 64-94. Print.

⁵ Uhl, 66.

⁶ Utgaard, Peter. *Remembering & Forgetting Nazism: Education, National Identity and the Victim Myth in Postwar Austria*. Berghahn, 2003. Print.

⁷ "Coat of Arms of Austria." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Web. 05 Jan. 2012.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms_of_Austria>.

⁸ Wally, Stefan. "Austrian Folk Art and Customs." Austria, Salzburg. Spring 2011. Lecture.

⁹ Kershner, Isabel, and Mark Landler. "Walter Reder, 75, Dies; A Nazi War Criminal - New York Times." *The New York Times*. 4 May 1991. Web. 03 Jan. 2012.

<<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/04/obituaries/walter-reder-75-dies-a-nazi-war-criminal.html>>.

¹⁰ Pelinka, Anton. "Taboos and Self-Deception: The Second Republic's Reconstruction of History." *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka. Vol. 5. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997. 95-102. Print.

¹¹ Pelinka, 100.

¹² Pelinka, 101.

Chapter Three: The Golden Age in Austria and the Production of Memory

Guilt, you see, is individual. What we must talk about is individual responsibility, then and now. Each of you has a responsibility that grows out of your history as a whole. You are not guilty because of what was done, but you also can't deny it. A people can't live without its history. We can't live without our history.

*-Ignatz Bubis
Chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (1992)*

Despite the unsustainable method of tabooing all discussion about a crucial historical era, the Austrians were enjoying a time of political and economic prosperity, as well as international significance in the 1970's. Politically, the SPÖ and ÖVP had entered an 'age of consensus' (which would last until 1999), a checks and balances sort of system with both parties in government controlling each other. Austria was determined to 'go it alone' and succeed as an independent nation. The Austrians derived such determination to coexist with a stable government after their prewar fighting had led to the takeover of National Socialism.

The two major parties' consensus on economic policy brought about a period known as the 'Wirtschaftswunder' (economic miracle). The officials of Austria developed a culture of labor negotiations in which Austria had the lowest strike rate in the Western world. In addition, Austria had the lowest unemployment rate of any Western country (0.8%), wages were restrained, inflation was lower than anywhere else in Europe, a business-friendly taxation system was created, substantial infrastructure

investment took place, and the currency was stable. As it glided through its 'golden age,' Austria was the envy of several foreign countries. The Austro-Keynesianism economic policy allowed the state to intervene in national industries to a great extent.

Approximately one third of Austria's industries were nationalized, a larger portion than any other Western nation. While this encouraged prosperity throughout the seventies, it was also endorsing largely inefficient industries. Additionally, the welfare system was becoming overburdened and unsustainable, the budget deficit was slowly growing out of control, and the West was effectively ignoring Austria's neutral status and treating it as a Western free-market economy, thus creating objections in Moscow.

On the international stage, Austria found its source of identity in its role as a neutral meeting locale for world powers. Discussions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the arms race between the US and the USSR brought international importance to Austria.¹ This was a crucial moment in the history of Austria. To achieve worldwide recognition was important to Austria's independent identity. For the first time in their history, more than half of the Austrian population identified themselves as 'Austrian'.

Throughout the years of Austria's prosperity, societal norms had retained the taboos of any discussion of WWII. The taboos had continued the healing process for Austrians of all political stripes and fulfilled the cultural functions that the taboos had been set up to perform. However, the functions of taboos are only effective for a limited time; there inevitably comes a point when the healing process must conclude and the truth comes out. This point often occurs simultaneously with a generational change, in which a younger generation begins to expose and question the taboos and self-deceptions,

often met with resistance by the older generation.² For Austria, this point most publically occurred in the mid-1980s during the Waldheim campaign. However, as stated above, ‘no society can exist without taboos’, this is inclusive of the post-postwar period in which a new set of taboos and historical perceptions had to be set to pave the way for the future.

Amid this time of prosperity, taboos and the rewriting of national history continued. The premeditated effort at creating a collective historical memory, including amnesia for a seven-year period (1938-1945), was primarily led by the political parties. According to Edward Timms, author of *National Memory and the ‘Austrian Idea’ from Metternich to Waldheim*, “the ability to forget what happened between 1938 and 1945 became a kind of public virtue, tacitly adopted by the leaders of the main political parties.”³ Nietzsche was among those to recognize that while complete historical objectivity is impossible, the question is where a state decides to draw the line between perception and reality.⁴ The tendency towards perception and social amnesia has been most notoriously done throughout central and eastern Europe in the last century. States use the frailty of memory to construct usable pasts to promote current agendas.⁵ For the Austrians, the war was molded into a version that improved national self-esteem. In order to do this effectively, monuments and museums were constructed, thereby creating tangible objects off of which the public could base their recollections as years passed.

Monuments, much like museums, are objects built with the intention of preserving memory of a person, object, or event. However, all memory is perceived, and therefore subjective. The creators of monuments are thus creating a tangible memory in which they are preserving their perception of the subject, trapping in any biases or desire

to purposely influence the memories of others. In some ways, monuments are the enemy of memory, in that they tie down a certain perception of memory and, over time, all other memory than what is portrayed in the monument is often forgotten.⁶

French philosopher Michel de Certeau acknowledges the main feature of memory as “that it comes from somewhere else, it is outside of itself, it moves things about, and when it ceases to be capable of this alteration, when it becomes fixed to particular objects, then it is in decay.”⁷ This is especially true in Austria. With the postwar chaos of all sides trying to regain peace and prosperity while living side by side (sometimes within the same family) in Austria, memory of the eight horrific years was hard to define. By erecting certain monuments depicting neutral memories, such as a memorial to the lost lives of Austrian soldiers, society as a collective was able to fix their memories to these objects and forget as much of the rest of the reality as they desired.

The majority of Austrian towns and cities created monuments to the deceased soldiers, but very few were built for the resistance fighters or victims of the regime.⁸ This phenomenon developed as a result of the power of *Kameradschaftsbund*, an umbrella organization of all of the veteran’s associations in Austria. The organization played a large role in deciding which monuments would be erected and, thus, the interpretation and memory of WWII. The *Kameradschaftsbund* purposely provided the soldiers with meaning for the years they had spent in the Wehrmacht (or SA or SS) by telling them that they had done their duty and protected their country, thus establishing the soldiers as heroes.⁹ With so many families connected to the returning soldiers, there was not much resentment about the mass creation of monuments to thank these men for making the

ultimate sacrifice. They became the victims of the war. Through the simple creation of monuments, the memory of the Austrians refocused on the soldiers who had fought in Hitler's army, not the Jews or any other group killed en masse by the Nazis. This memory was now, literally, set in stone.

Two examples of these monuments exist in Styria. One, built in 1952, was constructed by Wilhelm Gösser as part of the *Langenwang* war memorial (see Figure 2). 'Guter Kamerad' (good comrade) shows a dying soldier sitting atop a wall, which contains the names of dead soldiers. The name of the memorial clearly marks the soldier as one who done his duty and is seen as a man deserving pity and sorrow for his soon-to-be lost life. The second monument was created by August Raid in 1957 in the village cemetery of *St.Georgen/Murnau* (see Figure 3). Raid painted frescos of suffering soldiers being shot and falling to their death for the monument 'Kriegermahnmal' [warrior memorial]. Both examples clearly show the shift in focus to the Austrian soldiers of the German army as the true victims of the war.

Perhaps one of the most significant monuments constructed in Austria in the postwar period, at least by sheer size, is the monument in Vienna dedicated to the Soviet soldiers (*Heldendenkmal der Roten Armee*) (see Figure 4). The plaque in front of the monument states, "Monument to honor the soldiers of the Soviet army, for liberating Austria from fascism in April 1945" (see Figure 5). The monument itself boasts a semi-circular white marble colonnade around a figure of a Soviet soldier standing about forty feet above the ground. In front is a small pool with fountains that spray water up to the height of the figure. Its grandeur is emphasized. Such a huge monument is a clear

statement. By using the word ‘liberating’ in the plaque, the monument once again instilled the sense into the collective memories of the Austrians that National Socialism held their country hostage without any consent or involvement. Thus, although built by the Soviets in 1945, the monument fit well into the Austrian victimization narrative.

Museums are similar to monuments in their creation of memory, but they also play an important role in educating future generations. An anti-fascist exhibition was created in 1946 in the *Vienna Künstlerhaus* with the title “We’ll Never Forget” (Niemals vergessen) (see Figure 6). The title poster in the exhibition depicts a man about to swing a sledgehammer down onto a Nazi swastika. On the side, five flags hang: British, Austrian, Soviet, American, and French. By placing the Austrian flag in the line of other Allied flags, the Austrians purposefully portray themselves as being on the side of the Allies and as one of the liberators from the evils of fascism.

In 1970, the Austrian government built a museum for WWII. However, despite the passing of twenty-five years since the end of war, the focus of the newly constructed museum was still on Austria’s victim status.¹⁰ This is problematic because the postwar generations of Austria were unable to properly learn the lessons of the Holocaust without knowing the truth of and coming to terms with their ancestors’ role in the genocide. The construction of such museums leaves the potential for a less-educated youth. All museums risk the presence of bias in the information allotted. If this information is biased, the creators further jeopardize the future of the group by not properly educating visitors on the subject and the lessons to be learned.

An exhibition added to the museum in 1982 highlighted the suffering of Austrians in Nazi concentration camps. The exhibit seemingly ignored the fact that of the prisoners in the Austrian concentration camps, like Mauthausen, only one percent was Austrian. Instead, Austrians made up the majority of the guards and wardens of the concentration camps.¹¹ A museum is typically viewed as an academic, factual exhibition of history in which society can learn about an era, but the misuse of a museum can be very detrimental to the education of a population. The exhibit depicts the Austrian nationals as being the ones who suffered and should be afforded compassion and remembrance. Because of this, future generations are less likely to focus on the suffering of six million Jews at the hands of Germans and Austrians. Instead, they will focus on what they have learned: Austrians were victims of the Second World War just as much as any other group.

The education of postwar generations is of the highest importance for modern Austria. Despite a history of genocide and the temptation to rejoin Germany, the Austria of the 1970s, and still today, is a modern and advanced Western European state. Letting the education of the postwar generations of Austrians fall into the trap of fallacy, and the false depiction of Austria as solely a victim of Hitler, is among the worst fates. It is these generations that have the potential to lift Austria completely from the shadows of fascism. Yet, this cannot be wholly done if Austrians continue to live in a perpetual state of identity crisis and cling to the victim status. Education is key to moving on and moving forward.

The educational curriculum, especially as far as the period of prosperity in Austria, was not up to par for achieving this objective view of the past. A standard

Austrian textbook, published in 1970, comments on WWII: “The Second World War belongs to world history, but not to Austrian history. It was not an Austrian war. Austria did not participate in it.”¹² Although an obtuse statement at first glance, in the West there was Austrian acceptance of such a history because technically, Austria did not exist as a country during WWII. All Austrians fought in the Wehrmacht as part of Germany. Such deficient history lessons are extremely dangerous. We study the Holocaust so as to never let it happen again. To forget or to not acknowledge the responsibility or full ramifications of it is to risk its repetition. Massacres in other parts of the world since 1945, such as Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, alert us that the act of genocide did not die out with Adolf Hitler. For this reason, education of such events and all of the facts surrounding them is extremely important to future prevention. Austria’s rejection of significant realities relating to WWII is perilous for their future and the future of the international system.

In addition to biased history lessons in the classroom, there were very few serious discussions about WWII in the media, a lack of seminars or presentations on the subject at the university level, and hardly any organized educational visits to concentrations camps. Instead, Austrians were taught that they had been raised on the “Island of the Blessed.”¹³ In a search for a lucid identity, postwar generations learned how the will to compromise and reconcile had brought stability and prosperity to the country. Additionally, because the politics were so untroubled (the ÖVP and SPÖ coalition had been in existence for years), domestic tranquility was ensured. Neutrality allowed the

nation to feel secure, and the tradition of Heimat³ proved that Austria was a prosperous country as tourism boomed.¹⁴

As written by Frederick Kempe, “Memories fade – and the health of nations as of individuals depend on some measure of release from the wounds of the past.”¹⁵ In a national sense, the Austrians had to move away from a narrow focus on World War II in order to advance with the times. However, such advancement should have been done with basic understanding of Austrian history, accurately portrayed. As a citizen of world, it is one’s duty to know what happened in the Third Reich and the lethal consequences it had for over six million people. This duty is only heightened as a citizen of a country that was once part of Nazi Germany. The decades following the establishment of the Second Austrian Republic were positive in several ways for Austria and its national psyche. However, it could have been a wholly more progressive step in the development of the nation if the role of the Austrian people in WWII was a staple in the public education curriculum. If the healing process post-1945 had been completed properly, it is possible that the success of politicians such as Kurt Waldheim and Jörg Haider may not have been as extreme.

The production of *The Sound of Music* in 1965 was one of the greatest gifts the United States could have given to Austria. The movie displays the epitome of the Austrian Heimat: the beautiful rolling hills, the pride in Austria against German forces, and the songs of the land (despite their creation by Rodgers and Hammerstein). The

³ ‘Heimat’ is an Austrian word, loosely meaning homeland, which cannot be fully expressed in English terms. It is the love for one’s country, the negative reaction to an increasingly globalized world, and an integral part of being both German and Austrian.

tourism market soared and the younger generations of foreigners identified Austria in a much different fashion from the way in which their parents had; it was now a place of song, green hills, and loving families. Likewise, the younger Austrian generation could embrace this depiction and, along with the political and economic prominence the country was experiencing, find reason to be patriotic and nationalistic.

However, the economic prosperity and international prominence that Austria enjoyed in the 1970's was not sustainable. Everything that the Austrians had taken pride in during the past couple of decades began to lose importance. Again, the identity crisis of the past set into the Austrian culture. Economically, Austro-Keynesianism proved to be unsustainable when the international economic crisis hit in the 1970's. This, along with a steel crisis in Linz and the growing coalition of the EU around Austria, raised unemployment and decreased economic stability.¹⁶ On the international stage, the Eastern bloc to whom Austria had remained neutral collapsed in 1989. Neutrality had lost its place in world prominence, as had the 'go it alone' mentality, with the European Union gaining clout and economic advantage. Austrian nationalism, resistance to globalization and the loss of Austrian importance gave way to the popularity of the Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the key to Kurt Waldheim's successful campaign for presidency. As American scholar of Austrian studies Jacqueline Vansant stated, "Events of the seventies and eighties made it clear that unpleasant aspects of the past had been swept under the carpet, and that the picture Austria's youth was receiving was obviously false."¹⁷

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- ¹ Wally, Stefan. "Austrian Folk Art and Customs." Austria, Salzburg. Spring 2011. Lecture.
- ² Pelinka, Anton. "Taboos and Self-Deception: The Second Republic's Reconstruction of History." *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka. Vol. 5. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997. 95-102. Print.
- ³ Timms, Edward. "National Memory and the "Austrian Idea" from Metternich to Waldheim." *The Modern Language Review* October 86.4 (1991): 898-910. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011.
<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=national+memory+and+the+austrian+idea&gw=jtx&acc=on&prq=bless+my+homeland+forever&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on>>.
- ⁴ Pelinka, 98.
- ⁵ Rittler, Harry. "From Habsburg to Hitler to Haider: The Peculiarities of Austrian History." *German Studies Review* May 22.2 (1999): 269-84. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011.
<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=from+habsburg+to+hitler+to+&gw=jtx&acc=on&prq=a+disdain+for+the+past+jorg+haider%27s+austria&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on>>.
- ⁶ Forty, Adrian, and Susanne Küchler. *The Art of Forgetting*. 7. Oxford: Berg, 1999. Print.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Uhl, Heidemarie. "The Politics of Memory: Austria's Perception of the Second World War and the National Socialist Period." *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka. Vol. 5. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997. 64-94. Print.
- ⁹ Pelinka, 75.
- ¹⁰ Uhl, 70.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Uhl, 73.
- ¹³ Lamb-Faffelberger, Margarete. "Beyond "The Sound of Music": The Quest for Cultural Identity in Modern Austria." *The German Quarterly* October 76.4 (2001): 690-701. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011.
<<http://www.jstor.org/pss/3252083?searchUrl=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Daustria%2BWII%26gw%3Djtx%26prq%3Daustrian%2Bpolitics%2Bbradical%2Bbright%26hp%3D25%26wc%3Don&Search=yes>>.
- ¹⁴ Lamb-Faffelberger, 290.
- ¹⁵ Kempe, Frederick. *Fatherland: A Personal Search for the New Germany*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999. Print.
- ¹⁶ Wally, Stefan.
- ¹⁷ Vansant, Jacqueline. "Challenging Austria's Victim Status: National Socialism and Austrian Personal Narratives." *The German Quarterly* Winter 67.1 (1994): 38-57. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011.
<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=challenging+austria%27s+victim+status&gw=jtx&acc=on&prq=a+post-holocaust+anti-semitism&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on>>.

Chapter Four: The Revitalization of Anti-Semitism During the Waldheim Affair

[Waldheim's] very ordinariness, in fact, may be the most important thing about him. For if history teaches us anything, it is that the Hitlers and Mengeles could never have accomplished their atrocious deed by themselves. It took hundreds of thousands of ordinary men – well-meaning but ambitious men like Kurt Waldheim – to make the Third Reich possible.

*-Robert Edwin Herzstein¹
Archival researcher during the Waldheim affair (1986)*

Kurt Waldheim was the Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1972 to 1981. Waldheim, a successful diplomat and politician, ran for the presidency of Austria in 1986. In the course of his campaign, Waldheim became the clear frontrunner. As a person, Waldheim was not an extremely intriguing person. However, the Austrian ideals that he represented garnered national attention. In addressing Austria's role in WWII, Waldheim held, "Austria was never involved in the Second World War, Germany was. The Nazis were not in Austria, the Nazis were in Germany." Waldheim closely followed the familiar "Austrians, but not Austria" refrain of the postwar period. When the World Jewish Congress (WJC) discovered a discrepancy in Waldheim's autobiography in 1985, the small country's insignificant presidential election became internationally renowned. Waldheim's version of his wartime activities had placed him at law school in Vienna after being injured in the Wehrmacht. However, an incriminating photograph and files from the United Nations War Crimes Commission showed that Waldheim was actually an ordnance officer of the Wehrmacht and a member of the mounted corps of the SA for

Army Group E in Salonika, Greece, with knowledge of the German atrocities against partisans in the region.²

The fact that this was discovered by a group of foreigners (Americans), instead of Austrian journalists during a national presidential campaign, is significant. While Eli Rosenbaum and the other members of the WJC took some time to figure out all of the details of Waldheim's actual deployment and actions during the war, the discrepancies were immediately obvious. An Austrian historian or journalist should have exposed at least some suspicious incongruities while Waldheim was running for president (not to mention when he was being considered for the Secretary General position of the United Nations). Instead, Karl Schuller (pseudonym), the only Austrian originally involved in the affair and the person who tipped off Rosenbaum, felt the need to go to an American outlet to expose the story. In addition, he felt the need to maintain a pseudonym instead of releasing his real name with the story. The elements of such a culture that does not foster open journalism and freedom of speech is not one truly free of far right leanings.

The role of the media in the affair was extremely disturbing in a seemingly progressive, Western country. The *Krönenzeitung*, a newspaper read by over forty percent of Austrians, printed 176 articles about Waldheim during the controversy. Of this, more than one-third of the articles contained anti-Semitic elements. During the affair Schuller stated, "You can't blame the people here. They don't know. They only see what the media reports... it's like the Iron curtain. I never made the comparison before, but now I start."³ Rosenbaum blames the fact that those with conservative business interests control many of Austria's major media outlets as a vital contributing factor to the success

of the Waldheim campaign. Additionally, a study of anti-Semitism in Austrian media coverage of the Waldheim campaign released by University of Vienna Professors Maximilian Gottchlich and Karl Obermair accused the ÖVP and the Austrian press of “creating a climate of opinion” that made it acceptable to speak anti-Semantically. The study warned, “The floodgates have been opened.”⁴

While the international community urged Austria to vote against the man that they had blindly (without knowledge of his SA past) elected to the head of the UN, Austrians and their national press rushed to the defense of their fellow countryman. Public anti-Semitism developed quickly after forty years of postwar hiatus. Allies of Waldheim accused the WJC of “threatening tiny Austria” (reasserting the victim status), and Michael Graff, General Secretary of the ÖVP, warned the WJC on Austrian radio “further meddling in the presidential campaign could provoke feelings that we all do not want to have.” *Die Presse* and other major state-run Austrian newspapers similarly cautioned the WJC that they would be responsible for any resurgence of anti-Semitism in Austria, with consequences that “we cannot yet conceive”, terrifying Austrian Jews.⁵ Several letters threatening Jewish leaders were sent, including one addressed to the ‘Jewish Swine Department’ (for the WJC) that blatantly stated, “Hitler should have gassed you all.”⁶ Additionally, anti-Jewish, pro-Nazi slogans were spray-painted in public spaces. The Waldheim campaign did not shy away from using the public sentiments to their advantage: one poster boasted “Jetzt erst recht” under Waldheim’s picture, meaning “Now more than ever”. This theme was suspiciously similar to the pre-war Austrian Nazi slogan: “Nun erst recht,” with the same translation.⁷ Separation was

made between non-Jewish Austrian citizens and Jews in a ÖVP attempt to gather all citizens votes, “All good Austrians should for vote for Waldheim, and so should our Jewish citizens.”⁸ The statement by a ÖVP official in a public appearance transparently emphasized the distinction between those true Austrians and those Jewish ones.

To the Austrians, Waldheim was an exemplification of the ordinary Austrian man, one that had done his ‘duty as a soldier’. His selective memory and resistance to talk about his time in the German Wehrmacht was representative of thousands of Austrians. The WWII affair being dragged back into the public eye placed many Austrians on the side of the controversial presidential candidate. Waldheim campaigned that he did “nothing other than what a hundred thousand other Austrians did during this time... and we, my friends, are not criminals because of that.” Urging the public to move the focus away from his potential war crimes, he continued, “enough of the past, we have more important problems to solve!”⁹ An American Jew living in Vienna observed,

To say he is a war criminal misses the point. He embodies the attitude of the typical Austrian. It is not a problem with a single person. There are 10,000 Waldheims, 100,000 Waldheims. There are Waldheims in every shop, every government office, every school. There are Waldheim grandfathers and Waldheim children. Waldheim is not a person anymore, he is a state of mind.¹⁰

After the United States placed Waldheim on their Watch List, barring Waldheim from entering the US (a place not even given to Fidel Castro or Muammar Qaddafi), the Austrians reprimanded the international community for getting involved in a domestic election. Soon after, they elected Waldheim as their president. This vote was, essentially, a “public endorsement of the right to forget the past.”¹¹ The affair reopened a wound that had been tabooed into submission for forty years. A new generation, born after 1945,

began to question the role that their relatives had played in WWII, opening debates about the war for the first time.¹²

Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, the first head of government to belong to the post-war generation, was also the first to attempt to remove Austria's policy of resolve on innocence. He insisted that Austria must acknowledge and accept the responsibility of the Austrian people during WWII, including crimes committed.¹³ Additionally, Waldheim lost virtually all legitimacy as a head of state. The ban on his entry into the majority of countries (including the United States) and the clash of opinion between generations made his term as the president of Austria both fruitless and an embarrassment.¹⁴

Despite the beginning of discussions of WWII, the Waldheim affair also brought anti-Semitism back to the forefront of politics. The anti-Semitism that had existed in shadows for the last four decades developed openly in the wake of the campaign. However, three key features distinguished this new version from the old, Nazi-era anti-Semitism. First, this anti-Semitism existed without many Jews in the vicinity. Almost all Austrian Jews had been driven out of the country or murdered in the years leading up to and during the Holocaust. The Jews that had remained in Austria (numbering about 214,000 prior to war with only 11,000 in 1949) often lived in an isolated state, a higher percentage in rural homes than urban settings.¹⁵ In fact, anti-Semitism was seen to be significantly stronger in the regions in which there were no Jews living, and even stronger in those where the people had never had personal contact with a Jew.¹⁶

Second, this type of anti-Semitism was known as "anti-Semitism without anti-Semites," according to political psychologist Bernd Marin. Such discrimination was

forbidden by Austrian law, and thus had no open public support (despite the quips made by Waldheim's allies and press during the campaign). Instead, the anti-Semitic ideology was thought to be embedded in the 'collective unconscious' through a process of cultural sedimentation.¹⁷ While the ideology was officially illegal and repressed, it was part of a large percentage of Austrians' belief system, based simply on the culture. Still today, three-fourths of all Austrians hold at least slight anti-Semitic attitudes, according to Marin.¹⁸

Third, the new anti-Semitism was not a private phenomenon. Instead, the ideology had an eminent political potential. According to Marin, "There exists no political anti-Semitism anymore, but there still is anti-Semitism in politics." The Waldheim campaign was epitomic of this paradoxical situation. Politicians were able to capitalize on the attitude and encourage the resentments to their advantage while publicly rejecting the prejudice. Waldheim was particularly effective at this tactic in dealing with allegations from the World Jewish Congress.¹⁹ Widespread self-delusion about the role of Austrians in the Holocaust and the events leading up to it created a psychological state within the country that allowed for public anti-Semitic and xenophobic sentiments²⁰. This series of events not only elected a former SA member to the presidency, but also simultaneously brought the international reputation of Austria seriously into question.

Like taboos, widespread anti-Semitism does fulfill certain cultural functions. The use of the Jews as a scapegoat allows the lower classes to use the Jews as a symbolic representation of the reason for social inequality. The Jewish stereotype is interpreted as the "unattainable by the lower classes and explains the disappointment of people who feel

their success has been blocked.” Additionally, in Austria anti-Semitism acted as a stabilizer, common ground for families, relatives, neighborhoods, and colleagues.²¹ According to the adage, “misery loves company;” using the old scapegoat to complain about the current unemployment, political, or criminal situation allowed otherwise dissimilar Austrians to relate to their fellow countrymen. This renewed sentiment of anti-Semitism paralleled the growing anti-immigrant, xenophobic attitudes in Austria as a product of European integration. Such a sentiment would come to be embodied by Austrian politician Jörg Haider.

Kurt Waldheim did not run for reelection after his first term ended in 1992. Pope John Paul II in the Order of Pius IX awarded Waldheim knighthood in 1994 for “safeguarding human rights” during his term as U.N. Secretary General.²² More or less out of the public eye after his presidency, Waldheim lived with his wife in Austria until his death in 2007. During his funeral, the current President of Austria, Heinz Fischer, called Waldheim “a great Austrian.” Fischer claimed that Waldheim had been wrongfully accused of committing war crimes and praised the former president for his efforts towards world peace. Waldheim’s request held that no foreign heads of states or governments were invited to his funeral except the Prince of Liechtenstein. The Austrian Press Agency published a two-page letter posthumously by Waldheim in which he admitted making “mistakes”, including “dealing too late with the events” (although not admitting mistakes as a follower or accomplice of a criminal regime) and asked his critics for their forgiveness.²³

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- ² Rosenbaum, Eli M., and William Hoffer. *Betrayal: The Untold Story of the Kurt Waldheim Investigation and Cover-Up*. New York: St. Martin's, 1993. Print.
- ³ Rosenbaum, 257.
- ⁴ Rosenbaum, 386.
- ⁵ Rosenbaum, 143.
- ⁶ Rosenbaum, 215.
- ⁷ Rosenbaum, 156.
- ⁸ Rosenbaum, 289.
- ⁹ Rosenbaum, 246.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Timms, Edward. "National Memory and the "Austrian Idea" from Metternich to Waldheim." *The Modern Language Review* October 86.4 (1991): 898-910. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=national+memory+and+the+austrian+idea&gw=jtx&acc=on&prq=bless+my+homeland+forever&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on>>.
- ¹² Wally, Stefan. "Austrian Folk Art and Customs." Austria, Salzburg. Spring 2011. Lecture.
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- ¹⁴ Pick, 181.
- ¹⁵ Herzstein, Robert Edwin. "The Present State of the Waldheim Affair: Second Thoughts and New Directions" *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka. Vol. 5. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997. 116-134. Print.
- ¹⁶ Marin, Bernd. "A Post-Holocaust 'Anti-Semitism without Anti-Semites'?: Austria as a Case in Point." *Political Psychology* Summer 2.2 (1980): 57-74. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=a+post-holocaust+anti-semitism&gw=jtx&acc=on&prq=a+post-holocaust&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on>>.
- ¹⁷ Marin, 58.
- ¹⁸ Marin, 59.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Rosenbaum, 473.
- ²¹ Marin, 60.
- ²² Keeler, Bob. "Waldheim Knighthood Upsets Jews." *Sun Sentinel*. 28 July 1994. Web. 12 Mar. 2012. <http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1994-07-28/news/9407270566_1_catholic-jewish-knighthood-kurt-waldheim>.
- ²³ Leopold, Evelyn. "U.N. Pays Tribute to Waldheim, Who Writes "last Word"" *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, 15 June 2007. Web. 12 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/06/15/us-waldheim-death-un-idUSN1528473020070615>>.

Chapter Five: Xenophobia Embodied: Jörg Haider and the FPÖ

The fundamental problem isn't Haider. It's Austria.

*-Jacob Heilbrunn
World Policy Journal (2000)*

While the Waldheim campaign was in full force in 1986, the year also marked Jörg Haider's entrance into a political position that would bring him international attention. Haider, known as 'Austria's Wunderkind' (miracle child), was a native Austrian born in Upper Austria in 1950. His parents had both been part of the National Socialist movement in Austria prior to the war. His father, Robert Haider, joined the Hitler Youth group in 1929, at age fifteen. His membership in the group in 1929 is notable because the Nazis were not yet a major force in Austria at that point (Hitler did not come to power in Germany until 1933). Thus, Robert most likely joined because of an alignment with the Nazi beliefs and policies, not due to societal pressure. He continued his occupation with the party by joining the SA in 1932 and participating in the murder of Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss and the failed Nazi putsch in 1934. Robert, allegedly involved in the murder of a customs official, fled to Munich around 1934, where he stayed until the Anschluß in 1938. After the annexation, he returned to Austria to fight in the Wehrmacht.¹ Following the war, Robert was ordered to dig graves as part of the de-Nazification process.²

Jörg Haider's mother, Dorothea Rupp, was also a Nazi sympathizer. She was a leader of the Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM) (League of German Maidens) and was prohibited from teaching for a few years following the end of the war.³ Both of Haider's parents resented the Second Republic of Austria, with the SPÖ and the ÖVP's control of the government. Adding to the contempt for the elite, the Haiders fell onto tough economic times after the war. For the Haiders, the laws restricting debate on the Holocaust and taboos implemented about the war allowed them to neither have to confront their past nor alter their Nazi beliefs as long as they were not publically displayed.⁴

Jörg Haider began his legal association with far right policies in high school. He joined the nationalist student fraternity 'Burschenschaften Albia' for students inspired by liberal and nationalistic ideas. The fraternity notoriously practiced fencing moves on a straw doll labeled 'Simon Wiesenthal,' a famous Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter. Haider went on to study law at the University of Vienna, where he joined the nationalist fraternity 'Sylvania' and led the youth wing of the FPÖ (called the Ring Freiheitlicher Jugend Österreich [RFJ]). Bruno Kreisky, the former Jewish Chancellor of Austria, singled Haider out in his young adulthood as a promising leader "who might create an enlightened conservatism."⁵

Haider headed the RFJ until 1974, quickly moving up the ranks of the FPÖ leadership. He was elected as party affairs manager of the Carinthia branch of the FPÖ in 1976 and became the youngest delegate of parliament at age twenty-nine in 1979. Much of his political reputation was born out of the issue of the 40,000-person Slovene

minority in Carinthia, in which Haider strongly opposed both bilingualism and integrated schools with both Slovene and German-speaking students. In 1986, as Waldheim was being elected to the presidency, Haider defeated Vice Chancellor Norbert Steger for the position of the FPÖ party leader, a pivotal point in both Haider's political career and the success of the Freedom Party.⁶

The FPÖ, whose motto boasted “Unser Herz schlägt Rot Weiß Rot” (‘Our heart beats red-white-red’), is a nationalistic right wing party whose policies fit well with the xenophobic, liberal views of Haider. Anton Pelinka describes the FPÖ:

It combines pan-German traditions with Austrian patriotism, mixes opposition rhetoric with an appeal to xenophobic resentments, and plays with Nazi revisionism and Holocaust denial. The FPÖ has a ‘New Right’ agenda, and both aspects are legitimate in liberal democracies. But at the same time, parallels to Nazism have not ceased to exist.⁷

The FPÖ had moved towards the idea of promoting a *Volksgemeinschaft* [ethnic community], an idea that had also been fostered by the Nazis.⁸ The *Volksgemeinschaft* concept envisions a society in which states exist in a closed folkish community, tied together by descent, tradition and fate, with rights based on ethnicity. In a state where all people are similar in biology, the need for democracy and debate are superfluous, since there would be such a strong common interest. Still an advocate of a multiethnic world, the FPÖ simply desires that states of a single ethnic make up (with nationalistic tendencies) exist to celebrate different ethnic communities in a state-structured system. A celebration of the native, nationalist Austrian, the ethnocentric platform follows that foreign influences taint the purity of the community. Thus, stricter immigration laws are needed to stop the flow of immigrants into Austria, who take jobs from Austrians while

also taking advantage of the generous social welfare system. This type of policy produces a xenophobic attitude, in which foreign nationals are blamed for Austria's unemployment, housing shortages, high taxes, and criminal problems. Not while hidden, the xenophobic connotations come across strongly in the German terms used by the FPÖ: *Ausländerkriminalität* [crime committed by foreigners], *Scheinasylantern* [fake asylum seekers], *Überfremdung* [over-foreignization] and *Illegalen* [illegal, unregistered immigrants].⁹ The FPÖ has been careful to distinguish that foreigners are the enemy, not Jews, in order to keep a diplomatic distance from anti-Semitism.

With undeniable similarities to National Socialism, the FPÖ can also be equated to the Nazis in both parties' success as a 'Führerpartei', or a party with a sole leader (Hitler, Haider). Haider's ultimate goal was said to be the Chancellor of Austria. His social-demagoguery, xenophobic/nationalist policies, and anti-political populism, as well as his flexibility in adjusting his views to his present audience plunged Haider to fame in the political sphere. Haider often focused on very classic, populist themes that helped him garner support from the middle class, such as corruption, tax waste, and political incompetence. The Social Democrat-Christian Conservative coalition that had been governing Austria since that the start of the Second Republic was a source of frustration for several Austrians who were growing sick of the politics-as-usual phenomenon.

While definite similarities can be drawn between National Socialism and the Freedom Party, and several former Nazi and SS members were members of the FPÖ, there are distinct differences. National Socialism was an openly activist and military party, devoted to overthrowing parliamentary democracy and determined to construct a

mass movement. The FPÖ is a closer match to the *Deutschnational* parties of the past than the Nazis. *Deutschnational* parties were conservative, bourgeois pan-German parties. While they embraced the ideas of anti-Semitism, Volksgemeinschaft, anti-communism, and German nationalism, they were not the same, militantly, as the Nazis.¹⁰ They do differ from the FPÖ in that the *Deutschnational* parties were more elitist than populist.

Haider's success was reflective of the post-war search for Austrian identity and nationalism that was prevalent in a state that had never really flourished on its own until the 1970s. A politician that promoted the importance of Austria and the middle-class greatly appealed to those that continued to search for meaning for Austria. The timing of Haider's rise in popularity fell at exactly the right time in Austrian history: Austria's past with National Socialism had been dragged into the public eye again with the Waldheim affair, the Iron Curtain no longer existed to give Austria an international identity, Eastern Europe had opened and floods of eastern Europeans immigrated to Austria, Austria was facing entry into the European Union (a move away from nationalism and absolute sovereignty), and globalization of the economy and technical infrastructure was affecting everyday symbols of Austrian pride, including the currency. While Germany was troubled by the rise of Haider's power, many Austrians saw him instead as the only politician who could save Austrian democracy.¹¹ Rhetorically, Haider was an extremely effective politician, allowing him to harness the power of a media-driven, postmodern style of politics that captured that attention of the corporate elite and the younger

generation (most under thirty years old). The youth considered Haider to be their potential liberator from the current, patronizing two-party system.¹²

In 1989, the ÖVP and FPÖ formed a coalition in Carinthia and elected Haider as governor. In the course of his political career there, Haider made certain public statements that led some to see him as a Nazi sympathizer or anti-Semitic. He was infamous for remarking that the Nazi government had produced a “proper employment policy,” in contrast to the SPÖ government.¹³ The incident led to his resignation from his position. His justification of certain aspects of National Socialism continued throughout his career. He appeared at a commemorative event for former Wehrmacht and SS members in 2000 and praised the former members of Hitler’s army for being “men of character.”¹⁴ His reference to concentration camps as mere ‘punishment camps’ and Winston Churchill as a war criminal furthered international criticism of Haider.

However, these comments did not squelch Haider’s political career or the success of his party. Haider was reelected as Governor of Carinthia in 2000. The SPÖ-ÖVP coalition was continually losing votes in every election, which the FPÖ was gladly absorbing. In an attempt to keep power, the ÖVP proposed a coalition to the FPÖ in 1999, with three conditions: (1) The conservatives (ÖVP) got to elect a prime minister from their party while the Freedom Party would get the majority in parliament, (2) the FPÖ had to sign a declaration against racism, and (3) Jörg Haider could not be part of the government. The FPÖ agreed to the conditions and the far right entered government, causing an international panic.¹⁵

European Union Foreign Ministers called an emergency meeting upon receiving notice of the new Austrian coalition. Unanimously, it was agreed that it was unacceptable for the far right to be in government, and thus (because Austria had joined the Union in 1995) represented in the EU. The ministers put sanctions against Austria in place, including eliminating bilateral relations with Austria, not engaging in contacts of ambassadorial meetings with the state, and not supporting Austrian candidates for EU international office assignments.¹⁶ The *Washington Post* printed an article regarding the coalition on February 5, 2000, saying,

This week's diplomatic sanctions and protests against Austria's new right-wing government crystallized the view from abroad that Jörg Haider's xenophobic Party is the reincarnation of the fascist movement that brought dictators Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini to power in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁷

Again, Austrians considered themselves to be victims of the situation. In their attempt to be left alone, they argued that the elections had been democratic and fair; they did not see justification for foreign intervention. The sanctions were lifted in less than a year.¹⁸

Seeing the international aversion to his character, Haider stepped down from his position as party leader at the end of 2000 in an attempt to further his party's success. However, while Susanne Riess-Passer took over as the official head of the party, Haider allegedly still controlled the party from behind the scenes. His popularity continued despite political turmoil within the FPÖ, eventually causing Haider to break from the party to form his own branch, the Bündis Zukunft Österreich (BZÖ).

In assessing Haider's notoriety as a sympathizer to the National Socialist cause, it is worth exploring the idea: do critics of Haider see him as a Nazi only because they want

to see him as one? Is society so fascinated by the idea of a potential foreign dictator that they attribute characteristics of past dictators to him? To anyone that desired to see Haider as such, it was not difficult. As *The Economist* pointed out,

The tanned, cold, Aryan good looks, the liking for black leather, the taste for extreme sports and fast cars all hinted at it. So did the youthful membership of pan-Germanic mock-dueling clubs, the black-cross flags, the foggy Remembrance Day trysts with SS officers and the band of crop-haired followers.¹⁹

Haider became internationally known for his comments about the Nazi Party; however, these comments were much more globally publicized than any other policy promoted by the politician. The world remains somewhat fixated by the Holocaust. The sheer shock of what human beings are capable of still fascinates society. Because of this captivation, Frederick Kempe, author of the memoir *Father/Land* and President of the *Atlantic Council*, notes, “American reporters learn early on that the easiest way to get copy into the paper from Germany is to find some peg that recalls the past: a torched asylum here, neo-Nazis in the military there.”²⁰ The same is true for Austria. For a country about which little is known except for their involvement with National Socialism and the Von Trapp singing family, an article that reignites the possibility of a Nazi sympathizer is infectious. The attraction to Haider’s statements relating to WWII is possibly only a foreign obsession with a part of the world that went astray from 1938-1945. However, it is hard to deny the frequency of the comments made. Regardless of his Nazi sympathies, Haider exhibited a xenophobic attitude that, even independent from Austria’s history, is noteworthy and worth the apprehension felt by the international community.

On October 11, 2008, Haider died in a car accident, driving almost double the speed limit and under the influence of alcohol. The two far right parties (FPÖ and BZÖ) were rejoined after his death. While the Freedom Party currently holds twenty-five percent of the vote in Austria, it was often expressed (especially prior to 2008) that Haider, as a person, was much more important to the success of the party than the FPÖ platform. A symbol for many of hope against the entrenched political system and the recuperation of Austrian intentional prominence and identity, Haider's death will likely have a major affect on the party's success in the future.

However, it is his life, not death, which will be remembered in Austria and across the international community. The success of Jörg Haider was not a coincidence or an accident. Austria's history of identity crises and its careful reconstruction of historical events (especially those related to the German occupation) are directly responsible for a culture that seeks salvation in a candidate like Haider. The amnesic culture that was developed by way of monuments, educational curriculums, and a strong tendency towards self-victimization, developed a political sentiment of nationalism, mistrust and dissatisfaction. The parallel rise in power of the European Union surrounding Austria only helped to aid Haider in gaining support.

Among the most important aspects to note about the success of both Waldheim and Haider, like those soldiers successful in committing genocide of mass proportions during the Second World War, is that they were not extraordinary people. They were not people of astonishing intellect or the owners of powerful corporations. Kurt Waldheim and Jörg Haider were ordinary people who used a culture of anti-Semitism and

tendencies towards self-victimization and nationalism to propel their political careers. In a country that is among the most advanced and highly educated in the entire world, these people were successful through the use bigotry and ethnic superiority in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries.

¹ Heilbrunn, Jacob. "A Disdain for the Past, Jörg Haider's Austria." *World Policy Journal* Spring 17.1 (2000): 71-78. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011.

<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=a+disdain+for+the+past+jorg+haider%27s+austria&gw=jtx&acc=on&prq=a+disdain+for+the+past&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on>>.

² "Jörg Haider | The Economist." *The Economist - World News, Politics, Economics, Business & Finance*. 16 Oct. 2008. Web. 24 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.economist.com/node/12415006>>.

³ Heilbrunn, 73.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Heilbrunn, 74.

⁶ Hockenos, Paul. "Jörg Haider, Austria's Far Right Wunderkind." *World Policy Journal* (1995): 75-80. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011.

<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/stable/40209430?&Search=yes&searchText=Right&searchText=Haider%2C&searchText=Austria%27s&searchText=Jorg&searchText=Wunderkind&searchText=Far&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DJorg%2BHaider%252C%2BAustria%2527s%2BFar%2BRight%2BWunderkind%26acc%3Don%26wc%3Don&prevSearch=&item=1&ttl=2&returnArticleService=showFullText>>.

⁷ Musner, Lutz. "Memory and Globalization: Austria's Recycling of the Nazi Past and Its European Echoes." *New German Critique*. Spring-Summer (2000): 77-91. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Aug. 2011.

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⁸ Hockenos, 77.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Hockenos, 78.

¹¹ Heilbrunn, Jacob.

¹² Musner, 78.

¹³ Musner, 79.

¹⁴ Connolly, Kate. "Haider Embraces SS Veterans | World News | The Guardian." *Latest News, Sport and Comment from the Guardian | The Guardian*. 2 Oct. 2000. Web. 04 Jan. 2012.

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2000/oct/02/austria.kateconnolly>>.

¹⁵ Wally, Stefan. "Austrian Folk Art and Customs." Austria, Salzburg. Spring 2011. Lecture.

¹⁶ Schwarz, Peter. "The European Union's Sanctions against Austria." *World Socialist Web Site*. International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), 22 Feb. 2000. Web. 12 Mar. 2012.

<<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2000/feb2000/haid-f22.shtml>>.

¹⁷ Musner, 77.

¹⁸ Wally, Stefan.

¹⁹ "Jörg Haider | The Economist." *The Economist - World News, Politics, Economics, Business & Finance*.

16 Oct. 2008. Web. 24 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.economist.com/node/12415006>>.

²⁰ Kempe, Frederick. *Fatherland: A Personal Search for the New Germany*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999. Print.

Conclusion: The Pervasive Threat of National Myths

A world as dangerous as ours will not deal kindly with those who close their ears to discontent, who avert their eyes from the realities of injustice, and who refuse to entertain the question, "Are there ways in which I might be responsible?"

*-Richard Hughes
'Myths America Lives By' (2003)*

Historians remain fixated on the events of the 1930s and 1940s in Western and Central Europe. The mass murder of six million Jews is a topic that has captivated the public for the past seventy years. The simple fact that such an event could occur in such seemingly advanced, First World European countries is striking and unsettling to many. While some have questioned whether there is something uniquely 'German' about the ability to methodically kill millions, there is more evidence that the actions of the National Socialist Party were not necessarily destined to have a German (including those states annexed by Germany) outcome. The right political, economic, and social circumstances, along with the struggle for a national identity, allowed for a climate in which a lethal dictatorship was able to navigate its way to power.

Despite the destructive consequences of the last far right regime in Austria, the current far right party remains popular in the domestic politics. The FPÖ's success in holding one quarter of the country's votes is a direct result of a careful construction of a favorable national myth and identity of victimhood. This was developed through monuments, museums, and educational curriculum relating to the events of the Second

World War. Creating taboos and social amnesia for the years between 1938-1945 allowed the Austrian population to move forward in their Second Republic without properly addressing their past. Following the Allied victory, the international community did not treat Germany the same way. The German people were held responsible for the genocide, allowing for a much different healing process than took place in Austria.

The politics developed in Austria are unique in the sense that they stem from a major historical event that resulted in the death of over six million people. However, they are not unique in the sense that a national myth was developed in order to create a strong sense of nationalism that deliberately ignored certain aspects of the state's history. The existence of a national myth is not at all rare. Several states, including the United States, have a sense of nationalism promoted by their educational system, which encourages national pride and the belief that one's nation is a special place.

We tell ourselves stories in order create a sense of belonging to a particular group. This concept spans from a national level, such as the retelling of the positive elements of a country's history, to an individual level, such as the telling to oneself that they did the right thing, despite a nagging conscious to the contrary. The author Anais Nin once said "We see things not as they but as we are."¹ Our interpretation of the world, like that of our memories, is one of bias and perception. All understanding of the events of the world is filtered through personal experiences and relationships one has had in the past. On a national level, peoples tell themselves stories in order to prosper and promote their nation's ideals. For Austria in the post-war period, this required developing an alternative

version of events of World War II that placed the Austrian people in a more favorable role.

Nietzsche was quoted in his book, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), as saying, “Memory says, ‘I did that.’ Pride replies, ‘I could not have done that.’ Eventually memory yields.” In the case of the Austrian people, memory was one of the strongest substantiations to their compliance with and assistance to the Nazi cause. The taboos and laws instituted in the second half of the twentieth century allowed for the memory to remain hidden and, eventually, fade. The establishment of taboos is certainly not uniquely Austrian, though. No society can do without taboos on some level. Taboos bind the stories and national myths that allow a state to foster patriotism and national pride. Taboos allow memory to be questioned and rejected in the face of a more positive history and a brighter future. The Austrian example of the promotion of only a partially accurate national history seems extreme. However, an examination of the teaching of American history at a basic level proves that it is neither as extreme nor unique as one might think.

The United States promotes a strong sense of national pride in the American dream and the state’s ideals of human rights and freedom. According to Richard Hughes, in his book *Myths America Lives By*, the national myths of the United States are the foundation to which Americans affirm the meaning of the country.² America was founded as the ‘city on a hill’, a land of promise, religious freedom and equality. The development of the myth of an innocent nation from these ethnocentric views is not surprising. According to the myth, the United States stands for liberty and justice for all, above all, all the time. Of course, over the course of history this has not always been the case. At

times contrary political, economic, and military interests have driven American actions. These times represent historical events in which the United States should have fallen into the guilt of history.³ Instead, American policymakers and the developers of the curriculum for historical education have omitted or deemphasized such events. In his memoir about the modern German identity, Frederick Kempe noted, "I sometimes envy the Americans their naïve optimism that simply leaves out part of their own history. It is an ability the Germans don't have."⁴

The promotion of a national myth, especially via youth education, leaves students with a lack of realistic role models or cultural heroes and no ability to understand causality in history. History belongs to the victor, and the writer of history is that which controls the current hegemon. By limiting crucial facts and viewpoints, the hegemon has the ability to shape student perception on vital historical events, such as the handling of the Native Americans in the United States or the treatment of the Jews in Austria during WWII.

As discussed above, it has been found that societal taboos are fixed; they cannot exist indefinitely, functioning fully. While such taboos and semi-accurate perceptions of history do fulfill certain cultural roles, especially in a healing process, there comes a time at which they must be relinquished and the group is forced to move on. This involves a process of facing the realities of the past. For many, taboos are essentially invisible until they are brought into the light. The practice of moving past taboos and exposing the truth is a painful process, especially for those who lived through the events. However, it is something that must be done. Otherwise, the taboos continue to undermine the very

values they seek to promote. In the United States, for example, ignoring the treatment of Native Americans during the founding of the country allows Americans to continue to encroach on Native American land. In Austria, by overlooking the role of the Austrians in the Holocaust allows anti-Semitism and xenophobia to flourish in the public realm without consequences. It allows the election of a former SA member to president, because opening the discussion of the guilt of Waldheim opens further discussions about the guilt of all Austrians.

The antidote to the dangers of national myths is a proper education of the actualities of a group's history. While this does not imply that the more immoral actions of the group should be the focus of the curriculum, they must be included. In such a fashion, students have an opportunity to relate the lessons of the past to their current situation. There is the hope that such an understanding promotes tolerance and acceptance. Nationalism (of some form) will likely remain a major theme in the cultural upbringing of a citizen, but as long as such nationalism is tempered with critical self-thinking, a nation can produce a healthy future generation.

In Austria, the past half-century cannot be redone. However, there can be steps taken to ensure that the upcoming citizens are better educated. Textbooks must be accurate, acknowledging the role of Austria and its citizens in the war, on both the side of Germany and in acts of resistance. Proper teaching about other cultures, including the Jewish and Muslim cultures, is necessary to develop globalized, tolerant, and unbiased citizens. It can be hoped that such an education will spur public discussion about the period of WWII, steadily weakening the remaining taboos.

The entrance of the Adolf Hitler dramatically changed the history of Austria. The country's response to dealing with the events was not uniquely Austrian. Across the globe, national myths and the altering of history exist on a mass scale. The abundant support of former-Nazi Kurt Waldheim, the omission of the fact that Austria was involved in WWII in high school textbooks, and the sympathetic statements of Jörg Haider to former SS officers are shocking and should be used as a lesson to other groups (as well as future Austrians) that history does not exist in a vacuum. Its consequences are long-term and far-reaching, affecting all aspects of the present. To alienate the Austrian saga as simply an extreme example is to be ignorant of the world in which we live today.

This is not a story of a few people who tricked a country into voting for them. This is not an isolated event from a distant past. This is a lesson on what happened in an advanced Western society that fostered an environment of intolerance and inaccurate historical teachings. This is a warning of what can happen again. This is a story of the world in which we live today. This is a story of the human condition.

¹ Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: New, 1995. Print.

² Hughes, Richard T. *Myths America Lives By*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 2003. Print.

³ Hughes, 163

⁴ Kempe, Frederick. *Fatherland: A Personal Search for the New Germany*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999. Print.

Appendix

Figure 1

**Austrian Coat of Arms (post-1945)**

Source: Wikipedia – Coat of Arms of Austria
 Web. 05 Jan. 2012.
 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms_of_Austria>.

Figure 2

**Wilhelm Gösser's 'Guter Kamerad' (1952)**

Source: Uhl, Heidemarie. "The Politics of Memory: Austria's Perception of the Second World War and the National Socialist Period." *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka. Vol. 5. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997. 64-94. Print

Figure 3

**August Raid's Fresco on the 'Kriegermahnmal' Monument (1957)**

Source: Uhl, Heidemarie. "The Politics of Memory: Austria's Perception of the Second World War and the National Socialist Period." *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka. Vol. 5. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997. 64-94. Print

Figure 4

**Austrian Memorial to the Soviet Union in Vienna (1945)**

Source: Ashley Miller. April 2011.

Figure 5

***Austrian Memorial to the Soviet Union in Vienna (1945)***

Source: Ashley Miller, April 2011.

Figure 6

***Vienna Künstlerhaus (1946)***

Source: "Bildergalerie." *Universitaetsbibliothek Wien: Standort Zeitgeschichte*. Web. 16 Mar. 2012. <<http://bibliothek.univie.ac.at/fb-zeitgeschichte/bildergalerie.html>>.

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