

# Anti-Semitism Worldwide 2000/1

## AUSTRIA

*The European Union report prepared by observers appointed to monitor the sanctions against Austria labeled the FPÖ "a right-wing populist party with radical elements," and claimed it used "extremist language." During the year the FPÖ demonstrated its close links with National Socialism and with right-wing extremists. Extreme rightists and neo-Nazis intensified their activity in 2000. Contacts between Austrian and German right-wing extremists were also strengthened. The agreement on restitution payments to victims of National Socialism announced in early 2001 was criticized directly or indirectly by FPÖ members, including former party leader Jörg Haider.*

### THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Austria has a Jewish population of 10,000 out of a total population of 8 million, most of whom live in Vienna. The present community is made up of several distinct groups, the most numerous being returnee Austrians and their families, as well as former refugees from Eastern Europe. A Jewish primary school and high school, as well as several Jewish publications, serve the needs of the community.

Parliament approved a compensation package that was criticized by the Jewish community for withholding property. The new legislation provided a \$7,000 lump sum payment to Austrian survivors, no matter where they are domiciled today.

In October 2000, British artist Rachel Whiteread's monument "Nameless Library" was unveiled in Judenplatz in Vienna on the remains of a synagogue in which Jews had been killed in 1421.

### POLITICAL PARTIES AND EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

**The FPÖ** When the right-wing extremist **Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs** (Austrian Freedom Party – FPÖ) joined the federal coalition government in February 2000, the other members of the European Union (EU) (as well as the Czech Republic and Norway) responded by imposing sanctions on Austria.

Although, and maybe even because, the sanctions isolated the new government internationally, they were exploited by the coalition to consolidate a large part of the population against "Austria's enemies," so branded by Carinthian governor Jörg Haider. For tactical reasons, in order to reduce international criticism, Haider, who had led the FPÖ for 14 years, resigned as chairman in May; he was replaced by Suzanne Riess-Passer. In September, the three EU observers appointed to monitor the sanctions, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, former Spanish Foreign Minister Marcelino Oreja and German Human Rights expert Jochen Frohwein, recommended lifting them.

While commending some governmental measures, especially in the area of minority rights and the restitution agreement for victims of the Third Reich (see below), the EU report considered the FPÖ a "right-wing populist party with radical elements" which used "extremist language." It also stated that FPÖ members had exploited and reinforced xenophobic sentiments in propaganda campaigns, that the language they used had nationalist undertones, sometimes echoing National Socialist (NS) expressions, and that they trivialized the history of that period.

The observers also voiced concern about the state of democracy in Austria, especially in light of attempts by leading FPÖ members, including Minister of Justice Dieter Böhmdorfer, to silence or sue political opponents who criticized the Austrian government. Pointing out that an unprecedented number of libel suits had been brought by FPÖ politicians, the observers expressed fears that freedom of expression was endangered. After publication of the report, reservations were voiced by representatives of Austrian minorities. The gist of the criticism was the contention that the report focused on the legal protection of minorities, but not on its implementation.

In May, the Lower Austrian chairman of the FPÖ Ernest Windholz demonstrated the existence of close links between the FPÖ and National Socialism. In a ceremony honoring veteran FPÖ activists he quoted the SS motto *Unsere Ehre heisst Treue* (Our honor is loyalty). This slogan, slightly modified, appeared on banners carried at the *Ulrichsbergtreffen* in October. This annual meeting of former Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS men, many of them members of the extremist **Kameradschaft IV** (K IV), takes place at Ulrichsberg in Carinthia. Addressing the veterans, Jörg Haider said: "It can't be that the history of our fathers and grandfathers has turned into a rogues' gallery because of a strange zeitgeist and the fact that their achievements have been trampled on."

**Far Right Activity** Emboldened no doubt by the FPÖ's success, far rightists and neo-Nazis intensified their activity in 2000. Contacts between Austrian and German right-wing extremists were strengthened, especially with the NPD. Numerous Austrian extremists were guests of honor at the NPD's "Second Day of National Resistance" in Passau (27 May). These included Hemma Tiffner, publisher of the magazine *Die Umwelt*, Robert Dürr of the **Partei der Neuen Ordnung**, Bruno Haas, formerly leader of the neo-Nazi **Aktion Neue Rechte**, Helmut Müller, publisher of *Eckartbote*, and Herbert Schweiger of the **Nationalistische Front** and **Deutsche Kulturgemeinschaft** (see below). Helmut Müller is considered to be the main NPD contact in Austria. Like the Viennese FPÖ politicians Helmut Kovarik, Johann Herzog and Bärbel Schöffnagl, he is a leading activist of the far right **Österreichische Landsmannschaft** (ÖLM). Müller, who is editor-in-chief of the ÖLM magazine *Eckartbote*, spoke in Germany at several NPD district associations in 2000. He writes regularly for the NPD party organ *Deutsche Stimme*. Assessing the first 100 days of the government in the June issue, Müller stated that the FPÖ had not quite come up to the expectations of the far right, blaming "international blackmailers." In the October issue, Müller referred to violent neo-Nazis as "mostly decent 'bald heads'" and "people who care about their homeland and culture." Former SS-member and co-founder of the FPÖ Herbert Schweiger lectured on "national unity" (*völkische Zusammengehörigkeit*) between Germany and Austria at the "Second Day of National Resistance" (see above). In an interview with the Austrian magazine *News* (37/00), Schweiger, a senior NPD ideologue, openly admitted to having "trained thousands of young men in accordance with national values." Schweiger argued against setting up an Austrian branch of the NPD, on the one hand, "because Haider was still the vacuum cleaner of the right-wing potential," and on the other, because the *NS-Verbotsgesetz* (the law prohibiting National Socialist activities) could be an impediment. Asked about his relationship with the FPÖ, Schweiger replied that the FPÖ was merely an interim project that did not question the system and did not have solutions for the "big problems." Schweiger also holds a leading position in the extremist German cultural association **Deutsche Kulturgemeinschaft** (DKG), which held its annual "guest week" from 27 October to 1 November, together with the **Freundeskreis Ulrich von Hutten** (Friends of Ulrich von Hutten; Von Hutten [1488–1523], a German patriot and poet, was a key figure of the German Reformation). According to the DKG organ *Huttenbriefe* (5–6/2000), "the Nordic man" who lives "in harmony with nature" was the focus of the speeches.

Another guest of the NPD was Robert Dürr, a leading activist of the Austrian extreme right scene. In 2000, he was accused of infringing the *NS-Verbotsgesetz*, mainly through his party paper *PNO-Nachrichten*, but also through the conspiracy theory handbook *Antifa-Handbuch* distributed and possibly co-authored by him. On 7 November 2000 Dürr was found guilty in Eisenstadt of *NS-Wiederbetätigung* (reviving Nazi ideology) and sentenced to three years in prison, two years of which were suspended. Dürr immediately appealed. During the trial, the neo-Nazi **Hilfsgemeinschaft für nationale Gefangene** (HNG – Support Organization for National Political Prisoners and Their Relatives) in Germany issued an extensive dossier about alleged political prosecution of Dürr, which documented his position in the neo-Nazi network. Despite his conviction, Dürr continued his activities. Issue no. 20 of *PNO-Nachrichten* was devoted almost exclusively to an alleged anti-fascist conspiracy, directed at the *Volksvernichtung* (the destruction of the [Germanic] people).

The singer and NPD activist Frank Rennieke paid another visit to Austria in 2000. He was the guest of the ultra-right study group **Arbeitsgemeinschaft für demokratische Politik** (AFP) and the **Olympia** fraternity, to which FPÖ member of parliament Martin Graf also belongs. While the authorities tolerated Rennieke's performance at the meeting of the Olympia fraternity, on 17 June 2000, they tried to arrest him at the 35th "political academy" meeting of the AFP. His tapes were confiscated, but Rennieke managed to escape. In the meantime, he has been sentenced in Germany (see *Germany*).

Another far right group is the **Kritische Demokraten** (Critical Democrats), led by Horst-Jakob Rosenkranz, which publishes the magazine *Fakten*. Its May issue reports on a "victim" of the *NS-Verbotsgesetz*: Wolfgang Fröhlich, a former FPÖ politician in Vienna with connections to international Holocaust deniers, who has been under investigation for some time. In early May 2000 he asked for political asylum in the Iranian embassy. Fröhlich was especially active in promoting his antisemitic pamphlets in schools, recommending his book *The Gas Chamber Swindle*, and urging teachers to refuse to teach pupils the "Holocaust swindle."

As early as 1990 neo-Nazi Gerd Honsik, who fled to Spain in 1992, wanted to run in the parliamentary elections, together with Horst-Jakob Rosenkranz and Franz Radljun, jr., on the **Liste NEIN zur Ausländerflut** (NO to Foreigner Flood List), but the election authorities prohibited his candidature. Nevertheless, several issues of Honsik's magazine *Halt* reached Austria from abroad in 2000. Honsik also published the latest antisemitic pamphlet written by NPD activist Horst Mahler. In his book *Hello, Mr. Friedman*, Mahler – says Honsik's advertising campaign – brings to an end the "fairytale of Jewish innocence" and unmasks the "double standard of the reminder of 'German guilt', Michel Friedman," vice chairman of the German Zentralrat der Juden.

The right-wing extremist and former FPÖ official Peter Kurt Weiss from Salzburg has appealed a 15-month suspended sentence decreed in November 2000 under the *NS-Verbotsgesetz*. Weiss is national chairman of the far right **Bürgerschutz Österreich** (Protection of Citizens Austria – BSÖ), which tries to win support through anti-EU propaganda. In addition to lecturing throughout Austria, Weiss publishes extensively, including the book *The Secret of Power*, which reproduces *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and *The Power of the Zionists* by Ahmed Rami of Radio Islam. Since the mid-1990s, Weiss, together with Frank Swoboda, has been using the Internet Ostara websites and mailing lists to spread his philosophy of conspiracy myths and open antisemitism. Weiss is also behind the

publications *Die Hyäne* (The Hyena), *Die Krallen* (The Claw) and *Bürgerschutz Österreich*, all of which warn of a "chosen Hebrew master race," which has attained "world domination through a network of Freemasonry" and which "holds almost all peoples" under their sway (*Zinspeitsche*).

In 2000 skinheads numbered about 300 hard-core activists and 1,000 sympathizers. Personal and ideological links with neo-Nazi groups have been strengthened, especially since the establishment of the Austrian **Blood & Honour** (B&H) section in 1998. B&H successfully combine the violent subculture of the skinheads with neo-Nazi ideology and terrorist strategy.

Vorarlberg and Tyrol are strongholds of the skinhead and B&H movement. At the end of August 2000 about 60 neo-Nazis held a funeral march in Bregenz in memory of a comrade who committed suicide in detention. He was arrested after a violent clash among soccer fans in Innsbruck. After the parade, B&H organized a concert in a nearby town, which was attended by about 300 neo-Nazis from all over Europe.

The neo-Nazi-concept of conspiratorial, independent, but small organized groups, the so-called free fraternities (*Freie Kameradschaften*) is manifested in the Internet. In 2000 alone, 20 websites created by Austrian neo-Nazis went on line. Most of these websites are located on foreign servers, because Austrian law prohibits NS propaganda on the Internet. In addition, they recruit followers at concerts, claimed to be private parties.

Members of the older generation of neo-Nazi cadres, who dominated the scene until the early 1990s, were marginalized by these developments. Most of them had served prison sentences and after their release tried to renew their contacts. In November 2000 founder and leader of the neo-Nazi **Volkstreue Ausserparlamentarische Opposition** (VAPO) Gottfried Küssel, given an early release in summer 1999, met with about 50 neo-Nazis in the AFP clubhouse. The meeting, organized by Viennese B&H members and attended by Küssel's former second-in-command Gerd Endres, was broken up by the police. Other ex-VAPO activists such as Günther Reinthaler (Salzburg) and Rene Lang, leader of the so-called Förderwerk Junge Familien (Support Organization for Young Families) in Marchtrenk, Upper Austria, have also been attempting to reconnect to the neo-Nazi-scene. A demonstration planned for August 2000 by Lang and by German neo-Nazis from **Nationaler Widerstand** in the Bavarian border town of Freilassing against "EU dictatorship" and "the boycott against Austria," was banned by the German authorities.

## Racist and ANTISEMITIC ACTIVITY

**Violence and Threats** According to official figures, 13 violent racist and antisemitic crimes were committed, including six attacks on immigrants, four serious acts of vandalism of Jewish cemeteries, two attempted arson attacks against restaurants run by immigrants and one "serious threat" (a statutory offense according to Austrian criminal law). In addition, 450 violations of the NS-Verbotsgesetz and the law against incitement to hatred were reported.

Threats and insulting letters were received by critics of the FPÖ. Gertrude Knoll, a bishop in Burgenland, for example, was the target of such letters, which read, inter alia: "A pity Adolf isn't still around. You and your brood should be gassed." The FPÖ demanded that she be removed from her position for participating in protests against the coalition. In contrast to the majority of Protestant Church dignitaries, the Catholic Church did not speak out in her support, with the exception of one bishop.

**Propaganda** As mentioned above, antisemitism is a main ideological component of most extreme right-wing groups in Austria. In 2000, in spite of condemnation by the Austrian Presserat (Press Complaints Commission), the weekly newspaper *Zur Zeit* (published by FPÖ Bundesrat member John Gudenus and Haider advisor Andreas Mölzer) continued its antisemitic attacks. In issue 10/2000, an anonymous writer expressed approval for the newspaper, which is financially supported by the FPÖ: "Today few – except you – dare to touch on the de facto world domination of the Jews and their extension, Free Masonry." In issue 16-17/2000, the Catholic fundamentalist Friedrich Romig blamed Jews for the death of Jesus.

Echoing the entire far right scene, *Zur Zeit* used the suicide of the right-wing extremist Werner Pfeifenberger, shortly before his trial for violation of the NS-Verbotsgesetz, to attack the "Jewish journalist Karl Pfeifer" (23/2000). He was accused of "launching a manhunt that would lead consequently to the death of the hunted." Pfeifer had stated in the newspaper of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG) that Pfeifenberger had used Nazi tones in the 1995 FPÖ yearbook and stirred up "the old Nazi legend of the world Jewish conspiracy." Pfeifenberger sued Pfeifer and lost on all counts. The case was wound up in May 1998. Pfeifer then sued *Zur Zeit* for alleging that he had caused Pfeifenberger's suicide. He lost the lawsuit and according to the Vienna High Court, he could be attributed "moral responsibility" for Pfeifenberger's death.

The involvement of several FPÖ members with the Freiheitliche Akademikerverbände and their magazine *Aula* is evidence of an important link between the FPÖ and extra-parliamentary right-wing extremists (see ASW 1998/9, 1999/2000). *Aula* continued to publish antisemitic articles in 2000. In the May issue, for instance, Jews were blamed by German right-wing extremist Rigolf Henning for both world wars and, according to him, were likely to cause a third one. In order to circumvent the law, he refers to Jewish stereotypes as "those who make money out of war, who do not tolerate any powers besides them and mercilessly attack anyone who opposes their 'world order'." Radical rightist Hemma Tiffner and her magazine *Die Umwelt*, too, mobilized antisemitic resentment in 2000. Issues 3–4/2000 published an "appeal to commemorate Anderl in the church of Rinn, 16 July" (see ASW 1997/8): "When

Old Bishop Stecher of Innsbruck prohibited the ritual murder cult in Rinn, he intended this as a step in reconciliation between the restitution-hunters [the Jews] and those who pay – and that means: those who are unjustly presented with the bill, the defeated, the shamefully betrayed German people.” In the following issue (5/2000), Tiffner defends the NPD, as ”the only ones who supported Austrian interests openly, loudly and clearly.”

After having kept a relatively low profile since the 1998 conviction of one of their leading activists Konrad Windisch, the AFP intensified its activity in 2000. Windisch himself wrote in the July issue of the current affairs publication *Kommentare zum Zeitgeschehen*: ”After fifty years of brainwashing, many of our compatriots (and most of our German brothers as well) have developed an apology syndrome.” The AFP’s *Wiener Beobachter* (Vienna Observer) is even blunter in rejecting guilt and memory. Issue 5/2000 features the following lines entitled ”Feigenbaum’s Prayer”: ”Lieber Jahwe, mach mich fromm, / dass ich zu mehr Dollars komm! / Büsen, trauern und erinnern, / daran lässt sich toll verdienen! / Sieh’, wie grämen die sich sehr, / und mein Geld wird immer mehr! / Und dass es so bleibt noch lang, bin gewiss mir ist nicht bang...” (Dear Yahweh, make me pious / so that I can make more dollars. / Repentance, grief and memorizing / help me earn a lot! / Look how troubled they are / and I have more and more money. / I am sure that this will go on...).

NPD activist Horst Mahler contributes to publications of the right-wing extremist Walter Ochensberger from Vorarlberg. In *Top Secret*, the supplement of *Phönix* which specializes in conspiracy myths, he blames Jews not only for increasing antisemitism, but also for the entire wave of racist violence in Germany. Ochensberger himself wrote in the March supplement about the ban on the NPD: ”Now the vassals of USreal [sic – US/Israel] see the center of resistance in the organized will of German youth. Blinded, they believe that they can deal with the growing national resistance by banning parties and demonstrations.” In the following issue Ochensberger claims ”organized Jewry” were the wire-pullers behind the NPD ban. They ”don’t like nationalists because they are the only ones who dare to talk about Jewish crimes.” He alleges that the bomb attack in Düsseldorf (see *Germany*) was part of the Jewish campaign to get the NPD banned. In the same issue he reproduced an article from *Syria Times* denying the Holocaust. In early 2001 Ochensberger was charged with denying NS crimes.

Apart from skinhead and *Freie Kameradschaften* websites (which are usually on line only for short periods), Ostara disseminates arguably the most virulent antisemitic propaganda in the German language (see ASW 1998/9). Open ritual murder accusations can be found there at Easter time: ”They also slaughter according to Jewish rites in order to bake matzah – bread... Do you have blond, blue-eyed beautiful children at home? Watch out especially around Easter! They could easily end up as matzah-bread in the oven.”

Intensified left-wing support for the Palestinian liberation struggle in Austria is reflected in virulent anti-Zionism which is sometimes interchangeable with antisemitism. At a demonstration in October, following the upsurge in violence between Palestinians and Israelis, Austrian leftists and Palestinian nationalists called for the ”destruction of the illegal racist-imperialist formation ‘Israel’.” Some Austrian leftists even cooperate with terrorist groups such as Hamas. A Hamas delegation was welcomed at an ”anti-imperialist summer camp” in Italy, which was organized in large part by the Austrian *Revolutionär Kommunistische Liga* (Revolutionary Communist League – RKL). In numerous leaflets they accuse Israelis of systematic ”murder of children” and openly equate this with the Holocaust. According to the RKL, ”the capitalist imperialist genocide of the Jews cannot justify the capitalist imperialist genocide of the Palestinians. The victims of fascism have become the new perpetrators through Zionism.”

## attitudes toward the holocaust and the nazi era

**Restitution and the Extreme Right Response** In May, Austria set up a \$477.7 million fund as compensation to surviving Austrian former forced laborers. The agreement, which was finalized under the ÖVP (Austrian People’s Party) –FPÖ coalition government, was denounced by FPÖ Bundesrat member John Gudenus as ”Schutzgeld” (protection money). Interviewed by *Profil*, a liberal magazine, he said the payments were necessary to maintain trade relations, especially with the US. Referring to New York lawyer Ed Fagan who represented the victims, he said in this interview: ”He is a good businessman... But I believe that he does not help to raise sympathy for him and his kind.”

Haider also referred to the agreement at a FPÖ event in Vienna in October: ”Let’s talk about restitution: Not only those in New York and in the East are affected here, but above all our Sudeten German friends as well. We want to take care of our own people first.” Haider called Jewish victims of National Socialism ”those in New York,” comparing them with ”friends” and ”our own people” who should get priority in obtaining restitution.

At another FPÖ event in Vienna on 21 January 2001, Haider attacked Ariel Muzicant, president of the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*, who had criticized the restitution agreement: ”Mr. Muzicant will only be content, when they also repay his 600 million shilling debt which he has piled up in Vienna.” German Bundestag member Volker Beck (The Greens) labeled Haider an ”antisemitic agitator.”

Following the announcement of the agreement on restitution payments to Jewish victims of National Socialism in early 2001, FPÖ MPs bombarded responsible ministers with questions such as, ”How much longer do we have to pay?”

The nationalistic *Kärntner Heimatdienst* (KHD), a leading umbrella organization of the extreme right, announced that it, too, would intensify ”the struggle against Sippenhaftung (collective guilt) for Nazi crimes” and against the ”extravagant” claims for restitution.

In order to appease those voices, the government passed a restitution law (Heimkehrerentschädigungsgesetz) for former soldiers of the Wehrmacht and even former Waffen-SS members who were prisoners of war in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. This law adds an additional monthly payment to their pension. Excluded are former National Socialists convicted by an Austrian court.

**Holocaust Commemoration** In October a Holocaust memorial was unveiled in Vienna in the presence of President Thomas Klestil. In his speech, Klestil acknowledged that many Austrians were guilty of collaboration with the Nazis and underlined the necessity of fighting Nazism and xenophobia.

In April, Helene Partik-Pable, chairwoman of FPÖ-Vienna, caused a stir in the discussion about the cancellation of services at memorial sites abroad for victims of National Socialism by rejecting the idea that "our community servants look after commemorative plaques in Jerusalem."

The Israeli embassy in Austria issued a statement questioning the "willingness" of the Austrian government to "sincerely and honestly come to terms with the past." In an interview to The Jerusalem Post on 9 November, Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel (ÖVP) had reiterated the claim that the Austrian state was the "very first victim" of National Socialism.

## **RESPONSES TO RACISM AND ANTISEMITISM**

During the year 2000, demonstrations against the FPÖ's membership in the government coalition took place on a weekly basis in Vienna from the moment of its formation. On 19 February, some 200,000 gathered in protest. Individual acts of protest were also reported. Gerard Mortier, for example, resigned as director of the Salzburg Festival. The inhabitants of the town of Braunau am Inn, Hitler's birthplace, decided to counter international criticism of Austria by making it a center of international understanding, in an attempt to prove that Austria is ready to confront its past and take part in the struggle against fascism.