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Austrian Non-Reception of a Reluctant Goldhagen

Pieter Judson

German translations of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* appeared in Austria in September of 1996 to a strangely distanced reception. The book did not unleash in Austria the kind of public discussion it called forth in neighboring Germany. The book did not even sell particularly well. Most Austrian reviewers treated it with an exaggerated deference, praising the work for what they called its original focus on the participation of ordinary Germans in the Holocaust. Some went so far as to remind their readers that what Goldhagen had written about the Germans could be said of "Austrian citizens of the German Reich" or "citizens of Greater Germany" (Grossdeutschland) as well.¹ While Austrian reviewers acknowledged that the book's more controversial conclusions had drawn strong criticism in American and German scholarly circles, they seemed to have missed the more interesting phenomenon altogether, namely, the degree of Goldhagen's personal popularity in Germany. Instead, reviewers tended to describe the Goldhagen phenomenon purely as an academic controversy over narrow issues of interpretation.

The bloodless reception in Hitler's homeland of a book that characterized ordinary German attitudes toward Jews as eliminationist and documented the active complicity of ordinary Germans in the Holocaust might seem surprising. After all, public opinion polls of the past decade have consistently registered lingering Austrian bitterness over the Waldheim controversy and a defensive anger directed toward "world Jewry." Did no Austrians reject Goldhagen's accusations as constituting yet

I would like to thank Matti Bunzl, Heidemarie Uhl, and Douglas McKeown for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

1. Hans Rauscher, "Ganz gewöhnliche Deutsche," *Kurier*, 17 August 1996, 3; Arbeitskreis Goldhagen, *Goldhagen und Österreich: Ganz gewöhnliche ÖsterreicherInnen und ein Holocaust-Buch* (Vienna, 1998), 8.

another smear campaign? More to the point, given the reasons for the book's popularity in Germany, did not those Austrians seeking to undo the myth of Austrian victim status find it a useful confirmation of their arguments? Or did this nonreaction simply confirm the popular view among American, European, and some Austrian observers that Austrians stubbornly deny their perpetrator past? This latter was, for example, the conclusion reached by the Arbeitskreis Goldhagen, a group of left-wing university students who published the volume *Goldhagen und Österreich* in the summer of 1998.²

Whatever else it implied, I do not believe that the bland reception Goldhagen received at the hands of the Austrians simply reflected an ongoing denial of Austrians' historic participation in the Holocaust. The question of how to treat Austria's Nazi and antisemitic pasts is in fact central to public discourse in today's Austria. The question underlies several current controversies, both within the academic community and generally in the public sphere. It permeates almost every new attempt by each of the political parties to reposition itself with particular voting groups. In a sense, the question cannot be escaped. We might find fault with the ways in which the question is debated, with its particular manipulations at the hands of historians, politicians, and journalists, but the general consensus that Austria was Hitler's first victim no longer holds sway.

There is, therefore, some point in seeking to understand why Austrians did not react to *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. In a society where claims and counterclaims about the Holocaust, about Austrians' relationship to the Third Reich, and about the nature of Austrian identity are today more bound together than ever before, it may be useful to investigate the reasons why, in this case, the proverbial dog did not bark. In what follows I will argue that two contingencies—(1) the particular demands of Austrian politics in the fall of 1996, and (2) the nature of Goldhagen's argumentation itself—ensured that *Hitler's Willing Executioners* made few waves in Austria, even as it became a topic of almost obsessional proportion in neighboring Germany.

Austrian History, Austrian Identity

The new Austrian identity pieced together after the collapse of the Third Reich built on several political elements of the imperial and republican pasts, while strongly rejecting the German ethnic basis for national identity that had defined its predecessor. The first Austrian Republic had defined itself literally as the republic of *German* Austrians (the term *Aus-*

2. *Goldhagen und Österreich*, 7.

tria had theretofore included people of several national and ethnic identifications). Most citizens of the new state viewed potential *Anschluss* with Germany as their economic and cultural salvation, at least until 1933. After Austria achieved full independence in 1955, however, political leaders of Austria's two major parties, the Socialist Democrats (SPÖ) and the Catholic Peoples' Party (ÖVP) tended to define Austria's unique mission, and thus its identity in a Cold War world, according to its geographic situation between east and west, and its political neutrality.

This new identity ignored the paramount issue of Austria's interwar history, namely, *Anschluss* with Germany. It therefore fostered a kind of amnesia toward Austria's recent past, since it required a thorough denial of the powerful German nationalist traditions of the preceding fifty years. Austrian leaders were aided, of course, by the Allied declaration of November 1943 that proclaimed Austria Hitler's first victim, and by the Allied tendency to equate Prussian German traditions with the cultural origins of Nazism. This official rejection of the recent past for a completely new identity meant that in the public sphere, at least, the recent past would remain largely unexamined.

Amnesia about its recent past, however, did not require a denial of all Austrian history. On the contrary, evocations of Austria's imperial past have recently become a critical ingredient in the global popularization of Vienna as a center for tourism and high culture. It was also a critical ingredient in Austria's chosen identity as mediator between west and east, or between the developed and third worlds. Until the fall of neighboring communist regimes in 1989, Austrians often drew on a nostalgic vision of their imperial multinational, Catholic internationalist past to differentiate themselves from Germans and to construct a relevant mediating role for themselves in the Cold War era. The visible presence of Slovene, Czech, and Hungarian flags waving at Empress Zita's funeral in 1989, for example, was but a small reminder of Austria's historic relationship to those "nations," a relationship the latter now view far more positively than they did before fifty years of Soviet hegemony.³

3. In 1989 it was decided that a state funeral would be held in Vienna for the recently deceased Empress Zita, wife of the last Habsburg emperor Charles. Imperial tradition dictated the route to be taken by the cortege through the streets of the inner city to the Capuziner Crypt, final resting place of the Habsburgs. More than one commentator noted that the imperial cortege would have to circle the Albertinaplatz, site of Alfred Hrdlicka's recently erected monument to the victims of fascism. Should the coffin of the Empress (a reminder of a glorious tradition) be confronted with this brutal monument to Austria's recent past? Some wondered whether the route might not be changed to avoid the monument's brutal evocation of Jews forced to clean Vienna's streets during the *Anschluss*. The funeral, after all, was an attempt to recreate an imperial past that would evoke contemporary Austria's

When Austrians evoke the imperial past, it is, of course, an extremely selective process. Along with historicist architectural reminders of Vienna's centrality in East Central Europe, the city also houses visible monuments to more unsettling by-products of that very same age. Several monuments, for example, recall the rise of political, cultural, and religious antisemitism in Vienna. Even the most innocent of tourists can't fail to notice the ongoing popularity of Karl Lueger, Vienna's greatest mayor (1897–1911) and founder of the populist antisemitic Christian Social movement in Austria. Several monuments, a church, and a segment of the Ringstrasse testify to Lueger's gargantuan importance in Vienna's construction of its past and present identity. Today's ÖVP situates itself consciously as the postwar legatee of Lueger's Christian Social party.

Historians, both Austrian and American, have themselves given Lueger the necessary alibi to remain a respected and beloved figure in Austrian mythology, for his political use of antisemitism was above all considered opportunist and not ideological, situational and not racialist. Lueger's was the cultural antisemitism of the ordinary person, not at all the virulently racist, ideological ravings of an Adolf Hitler or a Georg von Schönerer. This distinction parallels another important element in post-1945 Austrian public culture that makes it difficult to square today's Austrian identity with the histories of individual Austrians. Immediately after the war, politicians on all sides strongly condemned antisemitism but carefully defined it as the ideologically racialist view held by the Nazis. Their narrow focus on Nazi antisemitism enabled cultural, private, or religious antisemitic prejudice in Austria to survive largely unexamined. The latter forms of antisemitic prejudice became unlinked from the public, ideological Nazi racism and continued to exist barely under cover, as documented by several public opinion surveys in the postwar period. This distinction had several critical repercussions, as Richard Mitten has pointed out: "[It] minimize[d] the significance of non-racial anti-Jewish hostilities, which no longer counted as antisemitic . . . [T]he identification of antisemitism with Nazism *tout court* implied that legitimate anti-Nazi credentials, which the founders of the Second Republic undoubtedly possessed, made one into an opponent of antisemitic prejudice."⁴

importance as a mediator between east and west. It would also remind the world of contemporary Vienna's touristic value, explicitly celebrating the city's role as the center of a multi-ethnic, culturally vibrant Empire. The Hrdlicka monument, however, evoked a past of civil war and fascist cruelty. It is not that anyone would deny the existence of this other past, but rather that this past has no role in the definition of the present. In the end, of course, imperial tradition prevailed, and Empress Zita passed by the Hrdlicka monument.

4. Richard Mitten, *The Politics of Antisemitic Prejudice: The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria* (Boulder, 1992), 31.

The new post-1945 Austrian identity did, however, take the legacy of the recent interwar period self-consciously into account in one important way. The political leaders of the new Austria were determined to minimize the kind of social and political polarization that had paralyzed the First Republic and produced civil war. In the social partnership system set up in 1957, they devised a way to divide social and economic power proportionately, not only among political parties, but also among the unions, chambers of commerce, and representatives of industry whom the parties directly represent. This system, known as *Proporz*, worked to smooth over all potential conflicts between labor and capital and created an enviable social stability in the Second Republic. While it resembled comparable neocorporatist arrangements in Western Europe, the influence of *Proporz*, as we will see, extended much further into the public sphere than in most other societies.

As the Cold War receded, as traditional taboos faded, and, most importantly, as Austrians themselves began to explore their twentieth-century histories more fully, questions emerged that undermined the traditionally shared assumptions of public life since 1945. The controversy surrounding the 1986 election of Kurt Waldheim to the Austrian presidency was only the most obvious example of ongoing dissonance between public consensus and private memory. The typical answers Waldheim provided to emerging questions about his peace- and wartime records during the *Anschluss* years suddenly no longer sufficed to remove those subjects from public discussion, as they might have in the past. Another such dissonance erupted from public confrontation with the traveling exhibition "Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht, 1941 bis 1944" in 1995–98. The exhibition documented in photographs the participation of ordinary German soldiers in atrocities on the Eastern Front. It challenged the ways in which thousands of ordinary Austrians had interpreted their personal experiences of war. In doing so it suggested an unsettling newer history that both confirmed individual memory and disputed the traditional public constructions that had up until now been used to interpret those memories. Ruth Beckerman's film *Jenseits des Krieges*, for example, captures this dissonance superbly. Her interviews with Austrian veterans at the exhibition show how similar memories can produce clashing interpretations between those who seek to justify the atrocities and those who can find no justification for them.

Austrian public life in the past decade seems littered with incidents that confront Austrians with events for which they have only recently begun to acknowledge some personal responsibility. These incidents demand more than an admission of complicity, for they challenge the very founding myths of modern Austrian identity. Incidents like the Waldheim

affair, confrontations like those surrounding the Wehrmacht exhibition, and, potentially, arguments in the Goldhagen book all point to a chasm between personal, lived memory and public national identity. They also make public a strong undercurrent of continuity between pre- and post-1945 ways of thinking about the world that precisely the public repudiation of Nazi antisemitism after 1945, mentioned above, failed to address. Several scholars have shown convincingly that Austrians often defended Waldheim in 1986 using cultural tropes that strongly evoked antisemitism, *even as Waldheim's defenders publicly repudiated antisemitism*. In the same way, critics of the "Crimes of the Wehrmacht" exhibition imagined an external conspiracy was responsible for denigrating the largely honorable men who had fought to defend their country (Grossdeutschland), while at the same time they deplored the fact that certain atrocities had taken place.⁵

The Austrian System in Trouble

Without a brief explication of Austria's recent political history, incidents like the Waldheim affair, the Wehrmacht exhibition controversy, or even the public response to *Hitler's Willing Executioners* appear to confirm that society's long tradition of hiding behind its status as Hitler's first victim. Yet this interpretation, popular in the West, misses several developments of the past two decades that also help to account for Jörg Haider's meteoric rise. In Austria one cannot speak of a public sphere, or public debate, without invoking the political parties that dominate that sphere so completely. In Austria there is very little public space for any opinion that is not in some way connected to the parties. This is partly a result of *Proporz*, the attempt to avoid the social polarization of the 1930s by giving each of the major parties, the SPÖ and the ÖVP, some official role in almost every public institution, either through appointments or funding. Appointments to university positions largely depend on party relations within those institutions, and institutional research agendas reflect to a large extent party agendas. The extent of government-funded activity in Austrian society (from banks to unions to chambers of commerce to Austria's newspapers) guarantees that particular debates will conform to party political ideological positions. Even Austria's relatively independent newspapers of record, *Standard* and *Die Presse*, are forced to engage in discussions whose parameters are often set by the party press.

In 1996 Austrian society enjoyed relative economic prosperity by gen-

5. See the excellent examples cited by Mitten in his *Politics of Antisemitic Prejudice*, chapter 8, "The Campaign against Waldheim and the Emergence of the Feindbild," 198–245.

eral European standards, yet it suffered from an escalating cultural polarization. As the government moved to fulfill the budget-balancing requirements for adopting the euro, anxiety over job security grew. Since 1989 many Austrians feared the dual specter of (1) cheap labor in the formerly communist neighboring states, and (2) a potential influx of southern and eastern European immigrants fleeing war in the former Yugoslavia. Austria alone, it was believed, would have to bear the burden of opportunist immigrants from the East and face the perceived security challenges that would accompany this immigration, while cutting subsidies to state-owned industries and welfare benefits to Austrian citizens. Polls taken in 1995 showed that a third of Austrians believed that guest workers and other foreigners living in Austria already had too many benefits.⁶ Enthusiasm for the European Union was also on the wane, particularly given the possibility of its eastward expansion and people's fears that this development would negatively impact Austrian employment.

Since 1986 Austria has been governed by a so-called great coalition of SPÖ and ÖVP, with the socialists as senior partner. During those years, however, the vote totals for both major parties have fallen drastically, particularly in the case of the ÖVP, which by 1992 was garnering only 27 percent of the vote at the federal level. The main beneficiary of this decline was Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ). The spectacular rise of the FPÖ and its charismatic leader Jörg Haider is the major phenomenon of Austrian politics in the past fifteen years. Originally a minor third party with single-digit popular support at the federal level, the FPÖ traditionally gathered an odd collection of German nationalists, anticlericals, small businessmen excluded from *Proporz*, and economic liberals who opposed the corporatist *Proporz* system. In the 1970s the FPÖ appeared at least superficially to be developing into Austria's counterpart to Germany's Free Democratic Party (FDP). And indeed, from 1983 until 1986, under Norbert Steger and its liberal wing, the party joined the SPÖ in a social-liberal governing coalition. A stunning coup executed by Haider and his nationalist allies in 1986, however, ejected Steger and the liberal wing from prominence and took the FPÖ out of the government and into opposition.

Ideologically the party moved sharply to the right; its program became synonymous with Haider's own positions, themselves a mixture of populist opportunism and German nationalist tradition. And Haider's stunning electoral successes only strengthened his power to dictate policy

6. Tony Judt, "Austria and the Ghost of the New Europe," reprinted in *Contemporary Austrian Studies* 6 (1998): 126–37; Richard Mitten, "Jörg Haider, the Anti-immigrant Petition, and Immigration Policy in Austria," *Patterns of Prejudice* 28 (April 1994): 27–47. Subsequent poll data in 1999 show the number has risen to around half of all Austrians, with even higher numbers among older Austrians.

within the party.⁷ The FPÖ took advantage of several realignments among Austrian voters that the two major parties ignored. Its popularity grew despite the fact that in 1993, the remaining social liberals abandoned the FPÖ to form their own party under Heide Schmidt, the progressive Liberales Forum (LiF). By this time, however, Haider had managed to make the FPÖ into a strong, populist, catch-all party of opposition to the status quo in Austria, attracting first the votes of conservatives dissatisfied with the ÖVP and later, increasingly, the votes of workers dissatisfied with the SPÖ.⁸

Far more important to Haider's rise than his German nationalist connections and his implicitly revisionist view of the Third Reich, however, was his strongly xenophobic stance on immigration during a period of economic restructuring and social uncertainty.⁹ Linking rising urban crime to the increase in immigrants and a crisis in the welfare system, Haider pushed a referendum to tighten Austria's immigration laws and to force immigrants to work. He vigorously opposed membership in the European Union, and although he lost that particular battle, he soon benefited from the growing perception after Austria's entrance that the drawbacks to the Union in fact outweighed the advantages. In the past four years Haider has even downplayed his explicit German nationalism (much to the disappointment of his original supporters) for an Austrian nationalism grounded in the sacred notion of *Heimat* that conjures German nationalist images less directly but more effectively. The FPÖ juxtaposes the ideal of *Heimat* to the perceived negative results of cultural pluralism, especially the growing threat of urban crime and welfare cheating. A 1998 FPÖ poster in Vienna trumpeted the words "Heimat, Sicherheit, Arbeit," and more explicitly, "Our *Heimat* should remain OUR *Heimat*."

Haider's successes need further contextualization, however. It is often forgotten that his is only the most successful, but certainly not the only,

7. Under Haider the FPÖ raised its federal election vote total in 1986 to 9.7 percent. In the 1990 elections it received 16.6 percent, while in 1994 it gained almost one-quarter of the votes cast. In 1995 the FPÖ vote total fell slightly, to 21.9 percent, but in the 1996 elections to the European Parliament (with no concrete repercussions for Austrian internal policy), the FPÖ gained 27.6 percent. Recently, in the parliamentary elections of October 1999, the FPÖ became Austria's second largest party for the first time. In some of the federal states, the FPÖ regularly receives at least a third of all votes in local elections. In the 1999 elections in Carinthia the FPÖ gained 40 percent, enabling Haider to assume the governorship.

8. In 1983 some 2 percent of Austrian workers voted for the FPÖ, while 70 percent voted for the SPÖ. In the elections to the European Parliament of 1996, however, each of the two parties received about 40 percent of the working-class vote. See Reinhold Gärtner, "Survey of Austrian Politics, 1996," *Contemporary Austrian Studies* 6 (1997): 303.

9. For stunning examples of Haider's statements on the Third Reich, and for his rhetorical uses of the immigration and welfare issues, see Hans-Henning Scharsach, *Haiders Kampf* (Vienna, 1992), particularly chapters 5 and 8.

new party capitalizing on general popular frustration with the Austrian status quo. Austrians on both the left and right of the political spectrum are currently demanding a more democratized, less bureaucratized political culture. To the new parties on the left that entered parliament during this period, the Greens and the LiF, less bureaucracy means more social and cultural pluralism, more *basis Demokratie*, less *Proporz*. For the Haider right, less bureaucracy means less red tape for business, less "welfare corruption," fewer union-boss privileges, as well as an end to *Proporz*.

Up until 1995, Haider's successes in Austrian politics came mainly at the expense of the conservative Catholic ÖVP. Struggling to present a coherent alternative to the socialists, the ÖVP was nonetheless implicated by its presence in the coalition and its historic responsibility for the *Proporz* system. Seeking to reverse his party's freefall, ÖVP leader Wolfgang Schüssel precipitated a crisis in 1995 by calling for new elections. These, he hoped, would be won by an ÖVP that would present a dramatic Thatcherite conservative alternative to socialist policies. Implicitly, however, this strategy relied on the idea of an ÖVP-FPÖ coalition, since by itself the ÖVP was unlikely to gain more than a plurality of votes. In fact, most Austrian voters opposed this option, fearing it would bring economic instability. Schüssel's decision backfired, and while the SPÖ actually increased its vote total to 38 percent, the ÖVP with 28 percent remained only just ahead of the FPÖ with 22 percent.¹⁰ The coalition was renewed, but in the shadow of a fast-growing FPÖ.

The political jockeying among the parties has been played out increasingly in the realm of cultural politics. Haider has all along been a master at exploiting cultural issues and social fears around immigration, antisemitism, and security. Constrained by coalition economic policies that bind it to the SPÖ, the ÖVP too has turned increasingly to the realm of culture and identity to give itself a recognizably differentiated identity. Church, family, and order are its stock-in-trade, along with subtle appeals to a rural nationalism against the cultural immorality of Vienna. Here the powerful influence of parties in the Austrian public sphere is clear. For if the ÖVP had not viewed the election of Kurt Waldheim as a crucial opportunity for it to regain power from the SPÖ in 1986, for example, the public debate, the coded antisemitic attacks on Waldheim's doubters, and the general defensiveness against outsiders attempting to control Austria would have been far less audible. Without the party (and party press) interest in giving it a specific construction, the Waldheim controversy could not have become a major public issue.

10. If one adds together the totals for the nongovernmental parties (FPÖ, Greens, LiF), it becomes clear just how much voter attrition has decimated the power bases of the two major parties in the past two decades. Over a third of Austrians now vote for other parties.

Since 1986 and the breakdown of the victim consensus, all the parties appear implicitly to be debating the question of a useful and coherent Austrian national identity. The debate mobilizes three distinct points of view. The ÖVP still defends a modified version of the traditional "victim" thesis against the newer "perpetrator" allegations of the SPÖ, Greens, and LiF. In his ten years in office, SPÖ Chancellor Franz Vranitzky was far more outspoken than any of his predecessors in acknowledging the damaging legacy of Catholic antisemitism to Austria, both past and present. In doing so, he abandoned the original myth that had enabled the SPÖ and ÖVP to find common ground since 1945. During Vranitzky's tenure, and after long debate in 1995, the government finally set up a National Fund for the Victims of National Socialism.¹¹ Other politicians on the left, notably in the Green and LiF parties, expressed outrage about Austria's hidden perpetrator past. In 1997, after viewing the "Crimes of the Wehrmacht" exhibition, Heide Schmidt, leader of LiF, spoke publicly about her past "blind spot" regarding antisemitism and Austrian participation in the Holocaust.¹² Haider's growing success points to yet another manipulation of the debate. He deals neither in perpetrators nor victims, but rather defends the national honor of patriotic German Austrians who fought in the Wehrmacht and the SS from the accusations of so-called communist sympathizer historians.¹³

The elections to the European Parliament in the fall of 1996 offered activists a particularly fertile context to pursue their cultural agendas. Haider treated this election as the moment of his possible breakthrough ("Wahltag ist Zahltag!" proclaimed a determined Haider on several campaign posters). The ÖVP and FPÖ fought to outflank each other, both for votes on the far right and now, as we will see, for the political center. As in the Waldheim years, history once again became an explicit battleground for struggles over Austrian identity.

The predictable gesturing to victim, perpetrator, or hero status of Greater German Austrians swiftly acquired new significance in the public mind due to a deft coup executed by Haider in the 1996 campaign. The Austrian media rightly treated Haider as the most interesting and perhaps the most important figure on the Austrian political landscape, and in September of 1996, Haider did not disappoint. With an enthusiastic Peter

11. This fund is smaller than many critics would have liked, and its use is limited. Several critics on the Left believed that the creation of the fund was far too little, too late, and that Vranitzky has not really earned the reputation he enjoyed as the man who had forced Austrians to face their history more honestly. *Goldhagen und Österreich*, 17–18.

12. Christa Zochling, "Mein blinder Fleck": Interview: Heide Schmidt über die Präsidentschaft und ihren Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit ihrer Eltern," *Profil* 52/53 (20 December 1997): 25–26.

13. Scharsach, *Haiders Kampf*, 125.

Sichrowsky at his side, Haider announced that the Jewish journalist and expatriate Sichrowsky, of all people, would lead the FPÖ's list in the upcoming elections to the European Parliament. This particular coup scrambled the terrain of Austrian politics further, and it unleashed a storm of controversy within an already divided Austrian Jewish community. Not that this move by Sichrowsky and Haider was entirely unpredictable—Sichrowsky has a record of creating controversy, given his role in the Ignatz Bubis biography and his relatively cordial views toward Waldheim. This alliance, however, immediately provoked the use of terms not frequently seen in the Austrian press, like *Hoffjude* and *Alibijude*.

The heightened controversy surrounding the simultaneous opening of the exhibition “Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht, 1941 bis 1944” in Klagenfurt a week later should be seen in this context. If Haider was going to make a play for the political center, neutralizing accusations of antisemitic crypto-fascism by displaying his Jewish credentials, the ÖVP, not to be outdone, would bid more openly for the crypto-fascist nationalist vote. Thus Bishop Egon Kapellari of Klagenfurt and the ÖVP governor of Carinthia, Christoff Zernatto, publicly declined to patronize or even attend the exhibit. In an interview, the governor rejected the “right-wing extremist clichés” with which Carinthia has been saddled. (In Carinthia, home of Jörg Haider, the FPÖ traditionally garners more of the vote than at the federal level.) The leader of the SPÖ in Carinthia opened the exhibition and claimed that while the majority of Carinthians have nothing to do with right-wing extremism, Nazi chauvinism, and heroizing of the war, still one could not forget that under the Nazi regime Austrians were not simply victims.¹⁴ Interestingly enough, a year before in Vienna the exhibition had been sponsored and praised by politicians from both ÖVP and SPÖ; only when it left for the provinces did it become an object of political controversy.

The decision of the Vienna FPÖ to retain its racist election slogan, “Wien darf nicht Chicago werden,” despite the fact that its federal list was now headed by Sichrowsky, a Chicagoan; the studied lack of concern displayed by FPÖ leaders for new evidence that linked the accused desecrators of graves at a Jewish cemetery in Eisenstadt to the FPÖ's *Bundesgeschäftsführer* Karl Schweitzer (and the FPÖ youth organization); and, finally, the academic travails of the ÖVP candidate, the perennial would-be-Ph.D. Karl von Habsburg, all added to a politically polarized environment. Finally, the appearance of a runaway bestseller on Hitler and anti-semitism raised the stakes of the debate further, forcing another open discussion of Austrian antisemitism on the public. The bestseller that

14. *Profil* 38 (16 September 1996): 34; *Die Presse*, 6 September 1996, 7.

unintentionally helped stoke the flames of Austria’s political fires received enormous press coverage. Its author was repeatedly interviewed, and its thesis (particularly its emphasis on a culture of popular and Catholic anti-semitism) was the subject of much public outcry. However, the book that gained so much attention was not Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*. It was instead Brigitte Hamann’s *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators*.

At precisely this moment, late August 1996, the German translation of Goldhagen’s book did indeed appear in Austrian bookstores. Its appearance was reported in the media, and the controversy it had unleashed in Germany and the United States duly described. The book was reviewed relatively positively, and editorials appeared on the scholarly aspects of the controversy the book had provoked in Germany and the United States. The book could be found on several journalists’ “best pick” lists of the season, but it did not unleash much of a public discussion in Austria, either among historians, in the media, among opportunistic politicians, or generally at large.

Goldhagen and the Austrians

The word *Austria* appears only once in the index of *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, referring to descriptions of how Austrians brutally forced Jews to wash the streets of Vienna after the *Anschluss* in March 1938. “The Austrians’ hearty celebrations included immediate symbolic acts of revenge upon the Jews, who in Austria, no less than in Germany, were believed to have exploited and injured the larger society.”¹⁵ In subsequent interviews, Goldhagen has stated that he treated the Austrians as part of the greater German people and therefore did not single them out in the book. In a September 1996 interview with Goldhagen, the Austrian newsweekly *Profil* asked him, with little success, to elaborate his views of the Austrians and their particular responsibility for the destruction of the Jews. Goldhagen maintained that because he considered the Austrians to be exactly the same as the Germans, just as enthusiastic and convinced about the destruction of the Jews, there was no need to single them out.

The *Profil* interviewers then asked about the higher percent participa-

15. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, 1996), 286–87, 605. There are no index entries for Vienna, Karl Lueger, Karl Iro, or Georg von Schönerer, for example, although Mauthausen does appear. The Schönerite Iro, as Hamann pointed out, made the suggestion in a speech to parliament that Hitler may have witnessed that immigrant Gypsies have an identification number tattooed on their forearms. Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (Munich, 1996), 191.