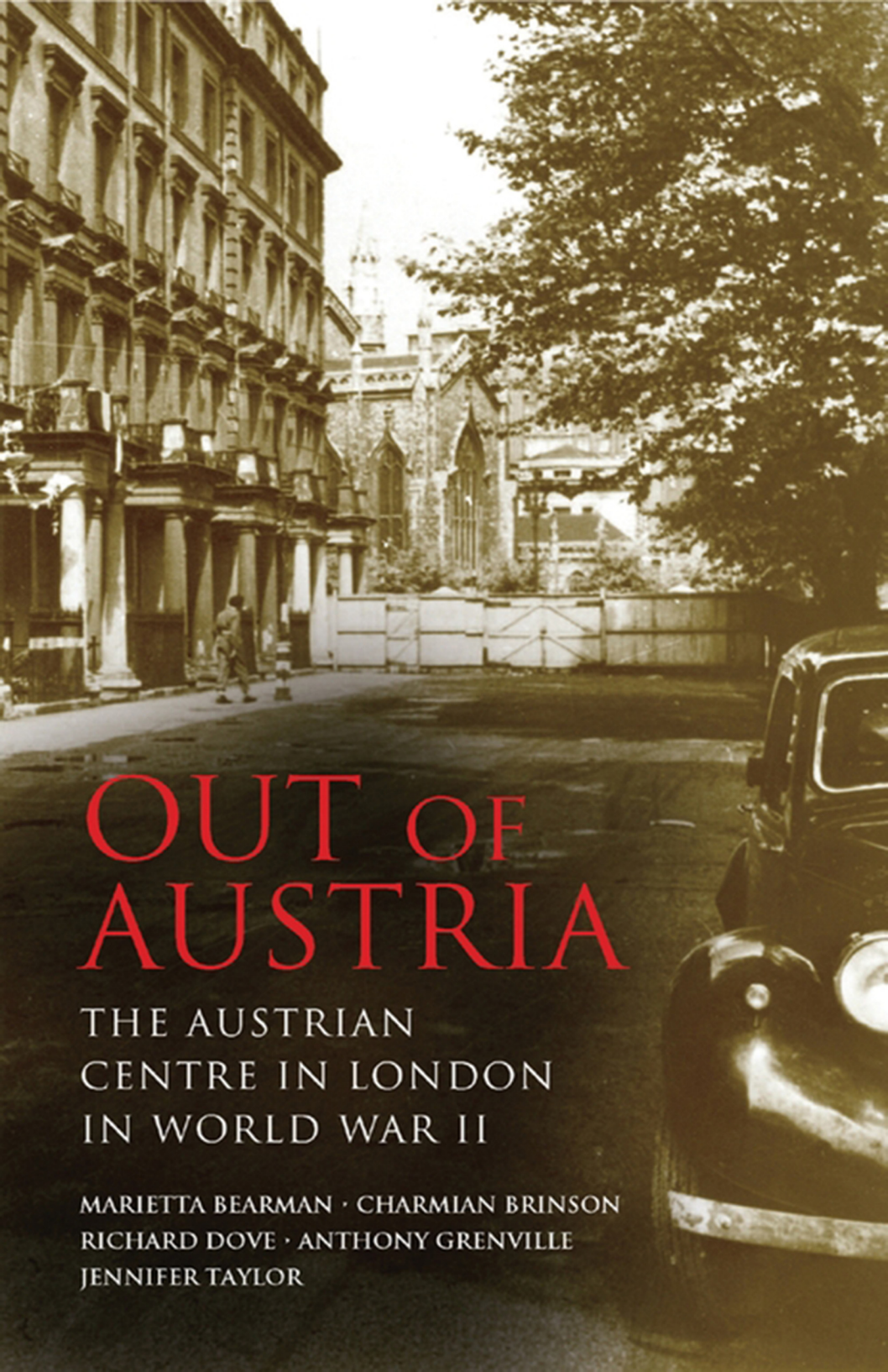

OUT OF AUSTRIA

THE AUSTRIAN CENTRE IN LONDON IN WORLD WAR II

MARIETTA BEARMAN · CHARMIAN BRINSON
RICHARD DOVE · ANTHONY GRENVILLE
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Austrian Centre, Westbourne Terrace, London W2

INTRODUCTION

RICHARD DOVE

This volume is the first full-length English-language study of the Austrian Centre, an organization set up by Austrian refugees in London shortly before the Second World War. The Centre is very much a paradigm of Austrian exile in Britain: founded as a self-help organization, intended to promote the welfare of Austrian refugees and to offer advice in their dealings with the British authorities, it became a wide-ranging social and cultural organization, which had branches in several parts of Britain and even, through its proxy, the Free Austrian Movement (FAM), aspired to influence British policy towards Austria.

During the early years of its existence, the Austrian Centre focused primarily on relief work, offering advice to Austrian refugees in their dealings with the British authorities and, in 1940, campaigning against the internment of 'enemy aliens'. When the Soviet Union entered the war in June 1941, the Centre was able to pursue a more overtly political role, playing an important part in establishing the Free Austrian Movement which campaigned for the post-war restoration of a democratic and independent Austria. Established in 1941, the FAM was an umbrella organization, to which the Austrian Centre was nominally affiliated: it was in fact the Centre's political mouthpiece, articulating and coordinating the political aspirations of Austrian refugees. The mandarins of the Foreign Office, minuting their mistrust in official memoranda, concluded that the Austrian Centre tail very much wagged the FAM dog.

By 1941, the Austrian Centre had three branches in London, as well as centres in Birmingham and Glasgow. The Centre at Westbourne Terrace in Paddington ran a restaurant, a library and a reading-room. It also promoted a wide range of cultural activities, both directly and through its youth organization Young Austria. It produced a weekly newspaper, *Zeitspiegel*, with a circulation of some 3000, and published a series of books and pamphlets under the imprint Free Austrian Books. It also sponsored a regular musical programme comprising concerts and choral performances,

while its centre in Swiss Cottage housed a theatre, the Laterndl, which produced a regular programme of plays and revues, featuring well-known actors and directors. The political aim of this cultural programme was to establish a distinctive Austrian cultural identity, a conscious correlative to the political agenda pursued more overtly through the Free Austrian Movement.

Although the Austrian Centre was probably the most successful organization created by Austrian exiles in any country in the years from 1939 to 1945 – a success achieved despite the daunting material and political difficulties in wartime London – it has attracted very limited scholarly interest, even in Austria. Although there have been useful short accounts of its work in the standard historical studies of Austrian exile in Britain, such as Helene Maimann's *Politik im Wartesaal* and the documentary volume *Österreicher im Exil: Großbritannien*,[1] no work has focused in detail on the Centre and its activities, still less on its interaction with British society, on which its effectiveness and even its very existence depended. Most of the previous publications dealing with the Austrian Centre have been memoirs by former participants which, however indispensable as source material, do not pretend to provide the depth of analysis or the historical objectivity required of an academic study.

The reasons for this striking neglect in Austria are embedded in the country's post-war history, and the climate of academic research it induced. Research into German-speaking exile started much later in Austria than in Germany, beginning only in the 1980s and gathering momentum in the following decade. Austria's reluctance to confront its recent past was both the cause and the consequence of the 'Opferthese', the assertion that the country had been the first victim of Nazi aggression and occupation. This version of the country's recent history, first elaborated by Austrian exiles (not least those connected with the Austrian Centre), was subsequently endorsed by the wartime Allies in the Moscow Declaration of 1943 which stated that Austria had been the first independent country to fall victim to Nazi aggression and described the 1938 Anschluss as an 'occupation'. The Declaration also stated that Austria 'carries responsibility for its participation in the war on Hitler's side', a claim of which little more was heard.

The myth of Austria's victimhood was endorsed by the Western powers in the immediate post-war years; in the new alignments of the Cold War it became an important aspect of Austria's post-war identity. It was later enshrined in the State Treaty of 1955 which formally ended the occupation of Austria and restored full sovereignty to the new Austrian state. The historical construct of the 'Opfergesellschaft', or victim society, became an accepted part of the Austrian Republic, obscuring the historical truth that most Austrians had in fact welcomed the Anschluss, and some had been involved in Nazi crimes.

Only in 1986 did the Waldheim Affair finally precipitate a different reading of Austrian history. During the 1970s Kurt Waldheim had been a successful, if somewhat anonymous Secretary-General of the United Nations, but it was only during his campaign for the Austrian Presidency that questions began to emerge about his wartime role as a young army officer – and by association, about Austria's still unacknowledged involvement in Nazi genocide. In July 1991 Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky made a statement acknowledging that many Austrians had supported the Third Reich and that some had participated in its crimes, calling for a reassessment of public attitudes.

The reverberations of the campaign against Waldheim gave belated impetus to exile research in Austria, legitimizing a field of study which had long been academically marginalized. Even today, exile research in Austria has not prospered in the academic mainstream, having been conducted almost entirely by organizations and associations outside the university system. The most notable of these pioneers was the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (Documentation Archive of Austrian Resistance), set up in 1963 by the former émigré Herbert Steiner, joined more recently, in 1984, by the Theodor Kramer Gesellschaft (whose name commemorates the lyric poet who found refuge in London), the Exilbibliothek im Literaturhaus (Exile Library of the Literature House), opened in 1993, and the Orpheus Trust, an association dedicated to the research of Austrian music in exile. However, for many years the only outpost of exile research within an academic institution was the University of Vienna's Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Institute for Contemporary History), where Erika Weinzierl was *Ordinaria*. Indeed, it was only in the 1980s that Austrian exile became a legitimate subject for academic research, resulting in a steady trickle of publications, such as those by Klaus Amann, Sylvia Patsch, Wolfgang Muchitsch, Friedrich Stadler and others.[2] More recently, other centres of exile research within university institutes have developed, such as the Institut für die Geschichte der Soziologie in Österreich (Institute for the History of Sociology in Austria) at the University of Graz, the University of Salzburg's Institut für Germanistik (Institute for German Studies), and the Institut für Theater- Film- und Medienwissenschaft (Institute for Theatre, Film and Media Studies) in Vienna. Despite such developments, it remains the case that there is not a single Chair of Exile Studies at an Austrian university.

While there is a body of academic opinion in Germany which regards exile studies as an area likely to yield diminishing returns, the consensus in Austria is that research into exile is still only at an early stage of development.[3] Perhaps the most striking confirmation of this is the establishment of an Österreichische Gesellschaft für Exilforschung (Austrian Society for Research into Exile) in March 2002 – virtually two decades after its equivalent was founded in Germany (1983).

There have also been other signs of a new-found readiness to come to terms with the past in Austria. In 1998, the government of the day appointed a Commission of Historians to investigate the ruthless expropriation of émigrés by the Nazis and post-war measures of restitution. The Commission's final report, submitted in February 2003, revealed a new openness, criticizing the Second Republic's half-hearted efforts to provide restitution for the victims of Nazi persecution.

Research into German-speaking exile in Great Britain has gathered pace significantly over the last two decades. The Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies (originally formed in 1990 and finally finding a home in 1995 at the University of London's Institute of Germanic Studies), to which the five authors of this study belong, is itself an example of the blossoming interest. However, the distinctive experience of *Austrian* exile in Britain has received little attention from British academics, with the obvious consequence that the specific problems of Austrians in wartime London, and even more their aspirations and achievements, have remained largely hidden from history. The Research Centre's decision to undertake a major research project into the Austrian Centre was therefore an attempt to make good this deficit of historiography.

One of the commonplaces of exile research is the relative lack of documentary sources. This is certainly true of the Austrian Centre. No complete archive of the Centre has survived and such records as do exist have been widely dispersed. Eye-witness testimony is now increasingly rare. Most of the leading participants in the Austrian Centre have now died, or their memories have faded, so that research becomes increasingly an attempt to record an historical narrative before the traces disappear.

The Austrian Centre closed at the beginning of 1947, having been badly affected, both organizationally and financially, by the return of key members to Austria. Looking back, the Centre's last President, Jenö Desser, wrote: 'The activity and the achievements of the Austrian Centre during the wartime years in London were, in my opinion, truly unique,' adding, with an understatement perhaps learnt in British exile: 'It would be worthwhile to write the history of the Austrian Centre.'[4] For nearly sixty years this story has remained unwritten, an historic oversight which the present volume seeks finally to redress.

Notes

1 Helene Maimann, *Politik im Wartesaal: Österreichische Exilpolitik in Großbritannien 1938-1945*, Vienna/Cologne/Graz 1975; Wolfgang Muchitsch (ed.), *Österreicher im Exil: Großbritannien 1938-1945: Eine Dokumentation*, Vienna 1992.

2 Klaus Amann, *PEN: Politik, Emigration, Nationalsozalismus: Ein österreichischer Schriftstellerclub*, Vienna 1982; Sylvia Patsch, *Österreichische Schriftsteller im Exil*

in Großbritannien: Ein Kapitel vergessene österreichische Literatur, Vienna/Munich 1985; Friedrich Stadler (ed.), *Vertriebene Vernunft: Emigration und Exil der österreichischen Wissenschaft*, vols. I and II, Vienna/Munich 1987/1988; Wolfgang Muchitsch, *Mit Spaten, Waffen und Worten: Die Einbindung österreichicher Flüchtlinge in die britischen Kriegsanstrengungen 1939-1945*, Vienna/Zurich 1992.

3 Cf. *Mit der Ziehharmonika* (now *Zwischenwelt*), March 2000, p. 5: 'In Austrian academic discourse, the attention paid to exile has up to now been very patchy. Big names like Erich Fried, Elias Canetti, Hilde Spiel or Manès Sperber are frequently mentioned and discussed. But many less prominent names and fates remain unacknowledged and largely unresearched.'

4 Cf. Jenö Desser, 'Mein Lebenslauf. 8. März 1904 – 8. März 1984', p. 92, unpublished manuscript in the possession of Hans Desser, Vienna.

PART ONE

'A VERY AMBITIOUS PLAN' THE EARLY DAYS OF THE AUSTRIAN CENTRE

CHARMIAN BRINSON

Although precise figures are hard to come by, there were probably around 30,000 Austrian refugees from National Socialism in Britain by September 1939, of whom perhaps 90 per cent were Jewish and the remaining 10 per cent political or intellectual exiles (these groups cannot, of course, be seen as mutually exclusive).[1] The first found their way to Britain as early as 1933, others arrived in the wake of the brief Austrian Civil War of February 1934. However, it was the Anschluss, Hitler's annexation of Austria on 11 March 1938, that was the cause of really significant numbers of Austrian refugees seeking refuge in Britain, while the events of Reichskristallnacht or Crystal Night in November 1938 precipitated a further influx of refugees that continued up until the outbreak of war.

In April 1938, shortly after the Anschluss, the first official organization of Austrian refugees in Great Britain was established: Austrian Self-Aid was set up as a charitable and non-political organization to provide assistance and information to fellow countrymen by Austrians already resident in Britain. Among them was a group of exceptionally committed and active members of the Austrian Communist Party (KPÖ) – though for the most part they chose not to advertise their political affiliations – who included Hilde Mareiner, Eva Kolmer and Franz West, each of whom would soon also play an important role in the associated Austrian organizations, the Council of Austrians and the Austrian Centre. All three of these organizations were able to boast the support of powerful British patrons: in the case of Austrian Self-Aid, for instance, they included the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the

Chief Rabbi, the Duchess of Atholl, the Liberal feminist Margery Corbett Ashby and the Socialist Catherine Marshall.

The scope of Austrian Self-Aid's activities was initially a wide one, comprising assistance to Austrians both in Britain and abroad. A pre-war report on the organization listed as its main tasks the obtaining of entry permits for Austrian children, and domestic and other permits for adults; the arranging of hospitality for refugees arriving in Britain; the provision of legal advice; as well as the assisting of Austrian interbrigadists interned in France after fighting in the Spanish Civil War and of Austrian prisoners in Nazi concentration camps.[2] Austrian Self-Aid's functions changed considerably after the outbreak of war when, in addition to offering employment advice, it was called upon to assist refugees facing the Alien Tribunals and those in internment camps in both Britain and France.[3]

In the autumn of 1938, prominent members of the Austrian exile community in Britain founded a second organization, the Ausschuss der Österreicher in Grossbritannien (originally rendered in English as the 'Committee', later as the 'Council of Austrians in Great Britain'). The organization was conceived as broad-based, initially bringing together Liberals, Christian Socials, Socialists, Monarchists and Communists. Its founding statutes defined the Council's task as being 'to represent the cultural, social and economic interests of all Austrians in Great Britain';[4] however the Council's mission also included a political dimension, for instance in the making of representations to the British authorities (formally distinguishing it from the later formation, the Austrian Centre, whose primary responsibility was to be for welfare). Once again, the project was supported by such prominent British patrons as the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Chichester. The eminent Liberal, Professor Friedrich Otto Hertz, became the Chairman (he resigned from the position early in 1940, however, because of internal tensions within the Council), while the Communist Eva Kolmer assumed the role of Secretary.

It was Kolmer who also played an important part in setting up the Austrian Centre, a plan conceived at around New Year 1938/39 to provide a meeting-place for the often isolated Austrian refugees in London and also to secure the continuing work of Austrian Self-Aid, threatened by lack of funds (it was hoped that further income for its work could be raised by the foundation of an Austrian Canteen).[5] On 3 February 1939, a letter appeared in *The Spectator*, signed by Kolmer, requesting public help for a 'very ambitious plan – namely to build up an "Austrian Centre", to have a house where the many refugees, who live in dreary quarters or in shelters where they cannot stay during the day,

Austrian Centre Restaurant, 1940 (Suschitzky)

could come, read and write, have classes and retraining, music, and all sorts of artistic circles'.[6] That same month, the Council of Austrians called a meeting of Austrian refugees at Friends' House, Euston Road (London WC1), at which, after Austrian Self-Aid and the Council had reported on their activities to date, they announced their decision now to work for the establishment of the Austrian Centre.[7]

The Austrians were fortunate in being granted the use by the Paddington Estate of a vacant house near Paddington Station (124 Westbourne Terrace) that was awaiting demolition and, a few months later, of the house next door, no. 126. A third house, 132 Westbourne Terrace, was acquired in the same way later in the year. Work was begun immediately on renovation and furnishing, as Kolmer herself described:

> The entire contents, library, musical instruments, furniture, kitchen equipment and the radio were the result of donations. All the work in the house was carried out by exiled Austrians. Carpenters, decorators, plumbers did their job. Doctors rubbed down the floors and washed the walls, and physicists had to test out their theoretical knowledge and instal electric circuits.[8]

In the event, everything must have been carried out at record speed as by 11 March 1939, the first anniversary of the Anschluss, invitations to a commemorative 'Meeting of Austrians' were able to announce that the Austrian Centre would open the following week.[9] The Centre was indeed inaugurated on 15 and 16 March 1939, the latter occasion being the official opening by Lord Hailey (Chairman of the Coordinating Committee for Refugees and a patron of the Council of Austrians) in the presence of around 150 British friends.

The Austrian Centre was set up as a charitable non-profitable organization under the Honorary Presidency of Sigmund Freud and, after Freud's death, of the former Austrian Ambassador to Britain, Sir George Franckenstein. It was run by a Committee that included representatives of a wide range of political affiliations (though, as in the sister organizations, the Communists played a particularly active role), and set itself equally wide-ranging aims, defined in 1939 as follows:

> 1. It should give Austrians the possibility of fostering their culture, their abilities and their talents within and on behalf of a community and of collectively preserving Austria's cultural inheritance and tradition.
> 2. It should serve as a bridge between the Austrians and the English in this, our host country. Equipped with the riches of our culture, we do not stand here empty handed, as beggars, expecting to receive charity; rather, we come as one people of culture to another and bring with us something that will enrich life in this country.
> 3. It will make possible the continuation and extension of our representational and welfare duties, our educational and cultural tasks, financed from income from our events and our work.[10]

The Centre, where in addition both Austrian Self-Aid and the Council of Austrians established their permanent base, proved successful from the very beginning, with several further branches being founded in London and the provinces. By June 1939 it already had 2000 members,[11] a figure that within five years was to increase to 3500,[12] and was the

Austrian Centre Reading Room, 1940 (Suschitzky)

largest and probably the most effective organization of Austrian refugees in Britain. Wilhelm Jerusalem, an habitual visitor to the Centre during the second half of 1939, fondly recalled the dispossessed yet resolute people he encountered there as well as the remarkable range of facilities on offer:

> I quickly grew to value and love the new type of people who came together here. There was not a single one among them whom the new barbarism had not robbed of a vital aspect of their life: their livelihood, their means, their family ties. Children without parents, parents without children. And yet with a will and a courage beyond compare, all were setting about establishing a new life [...]
> And the Centre gatherered them all to its bosom. It offered them food and drink at the cheapest possible prices. – Newspapers and radio. –

> Books, shoe repairs. – Lectures. For a paltry sum of money, one could experience the very best that art, science, music and literature have to offer.[13]

Certainly the Canteen (or Restaurant) proved to be as popular as the Austrian Centre's founders could have hoped, providing 'Genuine Austrian Cooking […] at a price which is far cheaper than would be needed to purchase similar quantities elsewhere'[14] in an attractive setting (where friezes on the walls illustrated scenes from Austrian life). From early on, the kitchen was catering for between 500 and 600 customers each day and almost twice that number on Sundays.[15] There was also a library – where the young poet Erich Fried worked for a time – and a reading room for members' use; the Centre's *First Annual Report* recorded a library stock by 1940 of 1530 German and 1020 English-language books as well as some in other languages, to be lent out at 1*d*. per book each week, while the reading room took copies of a wide range of newspapers in both English and German.[16] As a further service to members, the Library Committee decided to issue a weekly German-language digest of the British press for refugees with poor English:[17] entitled *Zeitspiegel*, it would evolve into the main newspaper of the Austrian emigration (this too would retain the Austrian Centre as its base, as would the Centre's own later publishing enterprise, Free Austrian Books). In addition, from as early as November 1938, the Council of Austrians was producing a regular publication, *Österreichische Nachrichten*, containing 'notes and paragraphs about practical refugee questions and such news as was available and of interest to Austrian refugees'[18] that included, from the time of the Austrian Centre's foundation, the full programme of events, lectures and performances to be found there.

These were of course part and parcel of the Austrian Centre's cultural remit to the émigré population it served. In his *Five Years of the Austrian Centre* (1943), the musician Georg Knepler would report thus on the Centre's endeavours to foster Austrian cultural traditions in Britain:

> Most of our activities in this sphere have been devoted to music. The Austrian Centre was opened with a concert. The numbers of concerts we have arranged since must be several hundred and many famous musicians of many nationalities have performed in our club premises or in concerts arranged by the Austrian Centre in concert halls.[19]

An earlier report on culture at the Austrian Centre, from June 1939, also took music as its starting point, before passing on to other artistic activities:

> For the benefit of AC members, the writers' group have put on, among other things, a Karl Kraus evening, and an Austrian authors' evening featuring Hilde Spiel and Richard Duschinsky. No fewer than 400 people took part in the 'Eternal Austria' evening. Our commitment to German antifascist literature resulted in an Ernst Toller evening [...] The establishment of a theatre for cabaret, that typical Viennese art form, completes the picture of our cultural activities.[20]

This theatre, the Laterndl, which was originally situated on the first floor at 124/126 Westbourne Terrace, opened in June 1939 and became an important focus of Austrian émigré life in North London.

In addition, the Austrian Centre set about putting on courses of various kinds for its membership to assist them in their new lives: English classes were organized from early on, for instance, backed up by a Debating Circle and an English shorthand course, and before long three rooms at 124 Westbourne Terrace were in continual use as class-rooms.[21] Retraining possibilities were offered, especially following the outbreak of war (when the existing employment restrictions for aliens began to be lifted): thus classes in welding and engineering were organized at the end of 1939,[22] while by March 1940 the Austrian Centre's 'Volks-Hochschule' or College would be advertising training in a further range of practical skills, listed as 'mural painting for advertising, handwork, carpentry, car mechanics, welding, painting and varnishing, lacquerwork, photography, electrical installation, cable laying, tailoring, machine-knitting, laundry work, decorating, machine-sewing'.[23] Other refugees already possessing skills of use to the membership were enabled to continue working in their own professions: workshops were opened at the Centre in August 1939 in which skilled tailors, dressmakers and cobblers could carry out repairs at reasonable cost on other members' clothes and shoes.[24] Moreover, in November 1939, the Austrian Studio for Arts and Crafts (ASTU) was established to enable refugee artists and craftsmen, too, to earn their living while carrying on 'the best traditions of Austrian Arts and Crafts as symbolised by "Wiener Werkstätte" and "Werkbund"'.[25]

Among the various professional and interest groups represented at the Austrian Centre, domestic workers were seen to warrant especial attention. Large numbers of Austrian women, frequently unpractised in domestic work, had arrived in Britain on domestic permits in 1938 and 1939 (there were, of course, few other employment options open to aliens at the time). The Association of Austrian Domestic Workers was

One of the Austrian Centre Workshops (Tailoring), 1940 (Suschitzky)

founded at around New Year 1939/40, soon moving its headquarters into the Austrian Centre premises, to cater for such women; as well as regular social events, the women were offered remedial classes in Englishand domestic skills, legal advice, and a monthly bulletin, *Die Österreicherin im Haushalt.* [26]

A further group encouraged to make its home within the Austrian Centre – and a particularly important one in the life of the Centre – was its lively youth group, Young Austria. Arising from a small circle of young refugees in North London, who had originally come together to commemorate the first anniversary of the Anschluss, Young Austria offered its members, aged 25 and under, a wide range of social and cultural activities aimed at organizing and educating young Austrians in exile, with the struggle against Nazism and the future of Austria very

much in mind. It also produced its own periodicals and publications (the latter under the imprint 'Jugend voran'). A thriving organization, by December 1943 Young Austria had no fewer than 1000 members (of whom around half lived in London, 350 belonged to provincial groups and 100 were serving in the British armed forces).[27]

* * *

Mention has already been made of the internal disagreements within the Council of Austrians that finally led to the resignation of its Chairman, Friedrich Hertz, early in 1940. Indeed, political tensions set in almost from the beginning: the Social Democrats, for one, parted company with the Council shortly after its foundation in protest at its engagement in political activities.[28] The Monarchist Graf Strachwitz was excluded from the Council in October 1939 in acrimonious circumstances,[29] while a further dispute centred around Dr Paul Wiesner, another spokesman of the Right, who in January 1940 tried but failed to organize a takeover of the Council in the course of which 'it almost came to a fight'.[30]

This last episode had its origins in the most enduring problem that Hertz, as first Council Chairman, had to address, namely the relations between the very energetic Communist faction on the Council and the other members. It was rumoured in the Austrian exile community at large during 1939 that the Council of Austrians and the Austrian Centre were falling under Communist influence, a matter that Hertz felt necessary to investigate. Some of the accusations, certainly, he found to be totally without foundation: a room used at night at the Austrian Centre, for instance, allegedly by Communists printing leaflets, turned out to be occupied by the cooks while making apple strudel![31] Hertz was extremely concerned to quell any rumours of this kind, which he feared might damage the reputation of the refugees in Britain, as well as to ensure potential critics that, regardless of the personal political position of any of the Council's members, the work of the Council itself had at no time been influenced by Communist considerations.[32]

The matter came to a head, however, in October 1939 when Leopold Hornik, a Council member, made an openly pro-Communist speech; Hertz seized the opportunity to move that supporters of totalitarian systems, whether these be Communist or Fascist, should be barred from membership of the Council. His proposal was not accepted but an alternative position was agreed, namely that the Council should from then on operate as a politically neutral body.[33] Indeed, at the end of January 1940, after his resignation, Hertz would assure Franckenstein, still the Honorary President of the Austrian Centre, that 'since that time

Lounge of the Austrian Centre Hostel, 1940 (Suschitzky)

the Council has really discarded politics, and has devoted his [*sic*] activity to welfare work on behalf of the refugees'.[34] However, the old difficulties had begun to resurface: two groups affiliated to the Austrian Centre, the Association of Austrian Domestic Workers and Young Austria, had published 'tactless remarks about the Austrian monarchists' without any attempt at restraint being made by the Centre leadership. In addition, theCouncil of Austrians had taken up a hostile position towards the newly established Austria Office.[35]

Hertz resigned from the Council on 26 January 1940, officially in order to be able to devote more time to academic work. Others followed his example: by 13 February Hertz was informing Franckenstein that most of the Monarchists had by then left the Council, leaving behind them a preponderance of left-wing members.[36] To Baron Alexis de Vivenot, shortly before, he had reported of the Centre: 'According to my