

Jewish Victims of National Socialism in Austria

By the early 1900s, Vienna had the third largest Jewish population in Europe. Almost all of Austria's 200,000 Jewish **citizens** lived in Vienna, making up almost 10% of the city's population. Many Jewish families were very active in the city's economic, political, and artistic scene—in 1934, 85% of the lawyers, 75% of the bankers and 52% of the physicians in Vienna were Jewish.

After Austria's **annexation** into Nazi Germany in 1938, the authorities immediately began to introduce the anti-Jewish laws into Austria, renamed the "Ostmark". For example, Jewish people with public careers lost their jobs, Jewish children had to go to separate "Jew" schools, and Jewish people were **banned** from public venues such as movie theaters and opera halls. The Nazis also arrested many people and sent them to work camps, and they closed or took over hundreds of Jewish businesses. There was a huge **surge** in random violence against Jewish people, and not only from Nazi soldiers—many Austrian citizens attacked their Jewish neighbors and stole their homes and property. Many Jews tried to leave the country, but it was a difficult and expensive process.

The November 1938 attack on Jewish citizens (called "Kristallnacht" (Night of Broken Glass) by the Nazis) was especially severe in Austria. 42 Jewish temples and synagogues were burned (almost all in the city), Jewish homes and businesses were **looted** and destroyed, and over 6,500 Jews were **arrested**—over half of them were sent to concentration camps. Jews began to **emigrate** even faster. Between 1938 and 1940, 117,000 Jews left Austria. For those who were left in the city, many were expelled from their homes and forced to live in overcrowded assembly flats with hundreds of others and little heat or food.

After war broke out, it became very difficult for Jews to leave Austria, and the Nazis began organizing mass deportations of Austrian Jews to **ghettos** in Eastern Europe or to concentration camps. Conditions were terrible for those living in the ghettos, and many died from starvation and disease. Many Austrian Jews never made it to the ghettos—thousands were shot by Einsatzgruppen (travelling killing units) shortly after arriving. By 1942 only about 7,000 Jews were left in Austria, and most of those who remained were either married to non-Jews or in hiding.

In 1942, the National Socialists officially began the "Final Solution," their plan to kill all of the Jews, Roma, and Sinti in the Third Reich. Instead of sending Jews and other "**undesirables**" to ghettos outside of the country, they began to send them to extermination and concentration camps to murder them.

At the end of the war, out of a population of almost 200,000 Jews in Austria, only about 5,500 remained. Over 65,000 Austrian Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. After the war ended, it was very difficult for Jews to get **reparations** from the Austrian government at first, as Austria considered itself to be a victim of Hitler and not responsible for paying for other victims. Limited reparation funds were set up in 1956 and 1961. In the 1990s and early 2000s, a number of other programs were set up to pay for stolen property and businesses, health care for survivors, reparations, and more.

citizen—der Bürger

annexation—der Anschluss

banned—verboten

surge—die Intensivierung

looted—geraubt

arrested—verhaftet

to emigrate—auswandern

ghetto—das Getto

undesirable—unerwünschte Person

reparations—die Entschädigungen