

**On 2 October 1939 the head of the local NSDAP branch, Emil Rothleitner,  
argues the case for deporting all Jews from Vienna<sup>1</sup>**

Report by the head of the local NSDAP branch for Vienna-Alserbach (R/R), signed Rothleitner,<sup>2</sup> to Kreisleitung I in Vienna, Kreisleiter Berner<sup>3</sup> (received on 4 October 1939), dated 2 October 1939<sup>4</sup>

Subject: the problem of Jews and housing

I hereby present my report on the current status of the Jewish problem in the area controlled by the local NSDAP branch in Alserbach in particular, and in the Gau of Vienna in general, and submit the suggestions below for your consideration.

The local branch area comprises 5 cells with 2,313 households and 6,178 residents, who are distributed across the individual cells as follows:

|        | Households  |        |       |             | Persons/<br>[household] |        | Residents   |        |                    |             |
|--------|---|--------|-------|-------------|-------------------------|--------|---|--------|--------------------|-------------|
|        | Aryan   | Jewish | Total | %<br>Jewish | Aryan                   | Jewish | Aryan   | Jewish | Total              | %<br>Jewish |
| 01     | 306   | 89     | 395   | 23          | 2.6                     | 2.7    | 785   | 240    | 1,025              | 23          |
| 02     | 447   | 84     | 531   | 16          | 2.7                     | 3.5    | 1,227   | 290    | 1,517              | 19          |
| 03     | 378   | 72     | 450   | 17          | 2.7                     | 2.7    | 1,040   | 194    | 1,134 <sup>5</sup> | 17          |
| 04     | 344   | 88     | 432   | 20          | 2.7                     | 2.9    | 917   | 259    | 1,176              | 22          |
| 05     | 462   | 43     | 505   | 9           | 2.4                     | 2.8    | 1,104   | 122    | 1,226              | 10          |
| Branch | 1,937   | 376    | 2,313 | 16          | 2.6                     | 2.9    | 5,073   | 1,105  | 6,178              | 18          |
| Branch | fall in the number of Jewish households since the revolution: <sup>6</sup> approx. 150. |        |       |             |                         |        | Fall in the number of Jewish residents since the revolution: minimal. |        |                    |             |

1 YVA, O.30/88. Extracts published in Gerhard Botz, *Wohnungspolitik und Judendeportationen in Wien 1938 bis 1945: Zur Funktion des Nationalsozialismus als Ersatz nationalsozialistischer Sozialpolitik* (Vienna: Geyer, 1975), pp. 80–86. This document has been translated from German.

2 Emil Rothleitner (1909–1987), teacher; joined the NSDAP in 1933; head of the Vienna-Alserbach branch of the NSDAP from 1938; worked for the Asset Transfer Office in Vienna, 1939, and for the Price Setting Office in Linz, 1940; called up for military service, 1942; held in US military captivity, 1945–1947.

3 Hans Berner (1901–1986), pharmacist, Protestant curate, and writer; joined the NSDAP in 1930; carried out extensive illegal propaganda activities during the period when the NSDAP was banned in Austria; NSDAP Gau superintendent for Vienna, 1938–1939; NSDAP Kreisleiter of the Vienna I district, 1939–1942; worked in the Party Chancellery from 1942; Reich office head, 1944; briefly interned by the Americans after the war; later worked as a writer in Germany.

4 The report was written on the official notepaper of the Vienna Gauleitung. This was one of several reports dating from Oct. 1939 in which heads of local NSDAP branches reported, at the request of their Kreisleitung, on the housing problems within their local branch area, and proposed solutions detrimental to local Jewish residents; extracts are published in Botz, *Wohnungspolitik*, pp. 79–88.

5 The numbers of residents in this line (1,040 Aryan and 194 Jewish) do not add up to the total given, which means the percentage is also incorrect.

6 The author means the National Socialist Anschluss of Austria in March 1938.

An analysis of the tables reveals the following:

1. The number of Jewish households has fallen considerably (by 30 per cent), but the number of Jewish residents has not significantly declined.
2. The average number of persons living in Jewish homes is not significantly higher than the number living in Aryan homes (2.9 as opposed to 2.6).

At first sight these two points appear contradictory, but in actual fact they are not. In March 1938 a Jewish household numbered approx. 2.0 persons, so that when 150 households were broken up, 300 persons had to be rehoused in the remaining 376 households, thereby causing the number of persons per household to increase from 2.0 to 2.9, giving a total again of around 300 persons. Jews moving in from other local branch areas in Vienna made up for the number of Jews who moved out of the area.

It is good news that 150 homes have become available for Aryans, but very bad news that the overall *number* of Jews has not fallen. Because this is the crux of the matter. Party comrades and the vast majority of our Volksgenossen desire nothing more fervently than to see the day when the last Jew has vanished from sight. They know very well what dangers lie in living in apartment buildings alongside Jews.

The Jews are the authors and disseminators of rumour and counter-propaganda. The foreign Jews continue to listen to enemy radio broadcasts, and in next to no time they are telling others what they have heard – greatly assisted in this by the telephone. The fact is that Jews are seldom prepared to give up their telephone, because it greatly facilitates contact with other Jews and with Aryans. The Jews make every possible effort to maintain their contacts with Aryans, which they manage to do by dint of various tricks – mainly by evoking sympathy (they are all ‘sick’ and ‘suffering’) and by disguising their attire (easily done) and their speech (dialect). The aim is to influence Aryans by means of disinformation and rumour, in order to undermine the morale of the German people. The danger should on no account be underestimated; the number of Volksgenossen who do not go out of their way to avoid consorting with Jews is still fairly large. This is how rumours suddenly appear and spread to large sections of the population.

A further danger is race defilement, which occurs continually as long as Jews are living in proximity to Aryans. It should also be pointed out that the number of Jewish prostitutes is constantly growing. For the rest, the pernicious effects of the Jewish presence within the German Volkskörper are so well known that I do not need to say any more.

It turns out that the number of Jews in Vienna has not fallen as far or as fast as we would wish. There were close to 250,000 Jews living in Vienna. Since the revolution, probably a third of these at most have moved away, which means that the majority are still here.<sup>7</sup> Emigration is now completely out of the question. Nevertheless, there is a widespread view among the population that the time is ripe for another decisive push to get the Jews out of Vienna, as it is thought that certain allowances that have hitherto had to be made will shortly be swept aside.

<sup>7</sup> By the end of July 1939, 104,000 Jews had emigrated from Vienna. In Dec. 1939 the head of the Israelite Religious Community of Vienna, Josef Löwenherz, put the number of Jews still living in the city at 58,000: Josef Israel Löwenherz, *Vollständiger Bericht von Dr. Löwenherz über die Tätigkeit Eichmanns und Brunners in Wien-Prag-Berlin, 1938-1945*, compiled by Tuviah Friedman (Haifa: Institute of Documentation in Israel, 1995), p. 20. By this time some 1,600 Viennese Jews had already been deported to the region around Nisko on the River San: see fn. 9.

Suggestion I:

Consequently, many Party comrades and Volksgenossen have suggested that we should seize this favourable opportunity to take radical action and deport all the Viennese Jews to what is now the German part of former Poland. This would be both a radical solution and an ideal one for *Vienna*. In principle it is not impossible. At a rough estimate, there are now 2 million Jews living in the German part of Poland, so another 170,000 will make no difference; but it does make a difference if there are 170,000 Jews living in Vienna – all of them agents of Mr Churchill – or none at all. The claim that this would not be feasible for technical reasons would make no sense to the National Socialist-minded population of Vienna, given that many more than 170,000 *Germans* have recently been forced to flee from Czechoslovakia and Poland.<sup>8</sup> It must surely be possible – so the argument goes – to carry out an organized resettlement of such a large number of people. People are even thinking about how such an operation could work in practice. Some think the Jews should be dispersed across the former Polish towns and cities, while others think it would be better to concentrate them in certain areas, such as the territory between the Bug and the Vistula; but in both cases, those who are fit for work would have to be confined in camps. In any event, the view of many National Socialists is that *when* the right moment comes, the opportunity should not be passed up.<sup>9</sup>

Suggestion II:

If this radical solution proves impracticable, I suggest that we exhaust all available options for reducing the number of Jewish residents *and* households. Those options are:

- (1) Facilitating emigration.
- (2) Concentrating the younger, able-bodied elements in camps.
- (3) Sending Jews who moved to Vienna from formerly Polish areas back to their municipalities of origin.
- (4) Expelling Jews of foreign nationality wherever possible (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, etc.).
- (5) Housing Jews who are over 70 and frail in Jewish care homes – as many of them as the Israelite Religious Community can accommodate.
- (6) Reorganizing the concentration of the remaining Jews in large Jewish apartments.

I would like to expand on this last point:

Two persons can easily be housed in an average living room, so that 8 or 9 persons living in a 4- or 4½-room apartment is not excessive. Within my own local branch area this would mean the following: if we assume that 30 per cent of my 1,100 Jews can be got rid of by the measures itemized under points 1–5 of Suggestion II, we will be left with 770 Jews in the local branch area. To house them, I would need 385 rooms, or in other words 128 3-room apartments or 96 4-room apartments, which is to say around 100 large apartments. I am quite sure I can find these 100 among the 376 Jewish-occupied apartments currently listed for the local branch area. Thus, at a single stroke I would not

<sup>8</sup> In 1938–1939 there were attacks on local German-speaking minorities in Czechoslovakia and Poland, in the wake of which many ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) fled these territories. Nazi propaganda exaggerated the attacks and used them to justify Germany's war policy.

<sup>9</sup> In the autumn of 1939 over 5,000 Jews were deported from Vienna, Moravská Ostrava, and Katowice to the area around Nisko on the River San: see Introduction, p. 39; Docs. 19, 24, 38, and 264.

only free up 276 apartments, or 70 per cent of the total (most of them small apartments) for Aryans, which would be a considerable propaganda coup, but I would also be ensuring that many hundreds of Volksgenossen were no longer exposed to the pernicious influence of Jews.

This idea is not at all new, and the Vienna municipal housing office has already tried something similar.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, however, this has met with little success – otherwise the occupancy rate per apartment would not be as low as 2.9 Jews. The reason for this lack of success is, firstly, that the housing office is not able – and on occasion, perhaps, not willing – to cope with the volume of work that this project entails. And secondly, the necessary legal mechanisms are not in place, or only imperfectly so. What good is it, after all, if the housing office instructs the landlord to give his Jewish tenants notice to quit, and he does so (which counts as a success in itself), but the Jew is then free to take his eviction notice to court, appeal against it, and get an extension of six months or more from the judge? At the end of the six months he is often granted a further extension. And in many instances the landlord's action for eviction, brought on official instructions, is simply thrown out. Here is a case in point: the property manager of the apartment building at 2 Pasteurgasse, Vienna 9, a certain Dr Heinrich Höfflinger,<sup>11</sup> who resides at 19 Praterstrasse, Vienna 2, was instructed by the housing office to evict the Jew Taussig,<sup>12</sup> who occupies apartment no. 13 (3 rooms) on his own together with an Aryan housekeeper. The first time, the action for eviction was dismissed by the judge of the Josefstadt District Court, Dr Walter Unger,<sup>13</sup> on the grounds that the Jew had been served with the papers on the 4th of the month instead of the 3rd. In the case of the second eviction notice, served 'in a timely manner', the property manager had to apply during the hearing for a stay of proceedings in order to save costs, since the same judge declared at the hearing that he would not evict the Jew, as he was married to an Aryan woman, and the marriage had produced a child who was not classed as a Jew. The judge cited paragraph 7 of the relevant law, which can only mean that Mischlinge, who are not classed as Jews, are to be protected *if they are living at the address to which the eviction notice applies*, which of course is not the case here. Paragraph 7 cannot be taken to mean that protection should be extended to a Jew who in our eyes is a race defiler.<sup>14</sup> Whether this was intentional or whether the judge

10 In the spring of 1939 the Vienna housing office had collaborated with the Gestapo to start the compulsory resettlement of Jews, who had to move into 'collective' apartments and housing blocks within the city area. The Law on Tenancy Agreements with Jews of April 1939 provided the legal basis for this measure: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1939, I, pp. 864–865; see also PMJ 2/277.

11 Dr Heinrich Höfflinger (1882–1963), officer, bank director, and landowner; served as commercial governor of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, 1943–1949, and as regent, 1949–1951.

12 Correctly: Paul Thausig (1868–1942), stockbroker. In July 1941 he was forced to move to Schwarzschanierstraße, and he died in Jan. 1942 of natural causes. He was married to the Gentile Henriette Thausig, née L'Herbier (1864–1904), with whom he had a daughter.

13 Dr Walter Unger (1910–1968), lawyer; appointed to the Vienna Inner City District Court in 1937; assistant judge in the regional civil court, 1937–1938, and in Josefstadt District Court from 1938; served as district court judge in Mistelbach (Lower Austria) from 1940, then in Vienna; called up for military service in Dec. 1942.

14 The Law on Tenancy Agreements with Jews (30 April 1939) stripped the Jews of their legal rights as tenants. Paragraph 7 stated that the regulations did not apply if a Jewish tenant had children from a so-called mixed marriage and these children were not classed as Jews: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1939, I, pp. 864–865; see also PMJ 2/277.

simply failed to understand the law, I cannot say. But if he did act in accordance with the law, then the law needs to be amended or explained.

Similar complaints can be heard from any landlord who has taken his action for eviction to court on instructions from the authorities. As a consequence of this we should insist either that the law should be changed to deny Jews the right to appeal against an action for eviction initiated on instructions from the authorities, or that responsibility for enforcing the notice of eviction should be taken away from the courts and handed over to the police. I understand that suggestions along these lines are already under consideration.

To ensure that evictions of Jews and their rehousing are not carried out in an aimless and haphazard manner, however, we should seek the collaboration of those agencies that are most familiar with the problem, namely the local branches of the NSDAP. The idea is *not* that they would be *actively* involved in serving notice themselves, but *rather* that they would take charge of the *planning*, deciding which homes are to be vacated, and where the evicted Jews are to be rehoused. It would then be the responsibility of the police or the housing office to evict these Jewish tenants. At the same time, every local Party branch must have the right to make *binding* recommendations to the housing office for replacement tenants, nominating Volksgenossen in its area who are clearly living in substandard accommodation. It would not be necessary to carry out a survey for this purpose, since every cell leader already knows who has serious damp problems, and where there are children with rickets living in dank basements. Any abuse of this right, for which the head of the local Party branch would be personally responsible, would have to be severely punished (also a chance to get rid of bad apples). For the rest, the housing office would be free to allocate the majority of the vacated Jewish dwellings as it saw fit.

The fact that some of the apartments in Vienna formerly occupied by Jews have now been vacated – 30 per cent within my own local branch area, for example – is, of course, entirely due to the efforts of the NSDAP, even if the methods used were not the right ones and left a great deal to be desired.<sup>15</sup> But there is no good reason why the problem cannot be solved in a proper manner, without infringing current legal regulations, which will have to be put in place accordingly. I should also like to point out that one often hears people saying, ‘when the Party had the homes, you could always get one’. I am aware that these suggestions will not end the housing shortage by themselves, and that they are far from perfect. I do, however, believe that they are calculated to significantly alleviate the housing shortage within a short space of time. But for *now* the most important thing is speed: he who gives quickly gives twice.<sup>16</sup>

I have reported at some length here on the twin problems of the Jews and housing, which are directly linked, because the issue is of very great concern to me, as it is to all National Socialists.

Heil Hitler!

15 Local NSDAP agencies, the Gestapo, and the housing office worked together to register ‘Jew apartments’ (*Judenwohnungen*) and evict the tenants. In practice this meant that tens of thousands of dwellings were ‘unofficially Aryanized’: landlords, Party members, SA men, or private individuals simply evicted Jewish tenants by force and without any legal grounds, and in many cases installed themselves as the new occupants.

16 Latin proverb: ‘Bis das, si cito das’.