

**On 20 June 1942 Ruth Maier describes her ambivalent feelings towards other Jews
and towards Austrian members of the Wehrmacht¹**

Handwritten diary of Ruth Maier, entry for 20 June 1942

20 June 1942

I was in a synagogue. It was quite strange. The Jews came well-dressed, wearing hats. One man, with a white shawl and black cap, prayed before a sort of altar. He prayed and sang. The Jews often joined in, half singing, half speaking. (It was like being inside a beehive.) Whenever I closed my eyes, it was like being in the Orient. Sometimes I could make out the word 'adonoi'. That is Hebrew: God.

I did not feel that I belonged there. I was a stranger. The Jews had black hair, they were small and dark. I saw them as *Jews* and myself ... as ... a non-Jew. There was something in me that drew back from them. – In the past it was different.²

On the other hand, I am so close to the Austrian soldiers. I wanted to talk to them. My people, I want to say. And yet they are not my people at all. Their way of speaking touches me so deeply. On the train I consoled one of them. He was talking to a Norwegian girl; she asked him where he was from. From Austria, he said. That made me feel really good. Later I saw many with the green peaked cap. They were so familiar to me. Their way of speaking is like a lullaby.

I have come to the strange conclusion that I don't know the Jews after all. It is so sad. I'd like to be together with them again. To love them undividedly. As I used to, when I was with Dita³ in the Zionist association. They sang Hebrew songs. In those days I had a sense of where I belonged.

1 HL-senteret, Oslo, Ruth Maiers arkiv 008. Published in *Ruth Maier's Diary*, pp. 394–395. This document has been newly translated from German.

2 It is thought that as a child, until around 1926, Ruth Maier belonged to the Israelite Religious Community of Vienna.

3 Ruth's sister, Judith Maier.