



# **A Dramaturgical Casebook**

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**PLAYHOUSE**  
**ON PARK** 

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# First Things First: Was She Real?

## NO!

From *The Truth Behind... The Sound of Music*  
[breakingcharacter.com](http://breakingcharacter.com)

### In the show:

Elsa Schraeder is portrayed as a sophisticated and wealthy socialite from Vienna who is engaged to marry Captain Georg von Trapp when Maria first arrives. Elsa is elegant, worldly and pragmatic, embodying the cosmopolitan allure of urban Austria contrasted with the wholesome and natural lifestyle of the von Trapp family. While not a villain in the traditional sense, her views on life, love and politics clash with those of the Captain and Maria, particularly in her willingness to accommodate the encroaching Nazi regime for the sake of convenience and security. Elsa's character adds complexity to the narrative, presenting a foil to Maria's innocence and passion and highlighting the moral and cultural dilemmas faced by the characters. Her eventual realization that her vision of the future vastly differs from that of the Captain's leads to their amicable breakup, paving the way for the love story between Maria and Georg to flourish.



### In real life:

The character of Elsa Schraeder loosely represents a real-life figure, though with significant artistic liberties taken for the sake of drama and narrative cohesion in the musical. In reality, before marrying Maria Augusta Kutschera (who became Maria Augusta von Trapp), Captain Georg von Trapp was indeed close to a woman named Princess Yvonne, though not engaged to her. Princess Yvonne was a friend of the family, and any romantic involvement is not documented in the same way as depicted in the musical and film adaptations. The character of Elsa Schraeder, with her distinct personality and societal views, was created to add depth to the storyline, providing a contrast to Maria and highlighting the cultural and ideological divides within Austria at the time. This creative decision enriches the narrative, creating a more complex love story and offering insight into the choices facing individuals in the shadow of the Nazi annexation of Austria.

## **What is a Baron/Baroness? (*from Britannica.com*)**

Title of nobility, ranking below a viscount (or below a count in countries without viscounts). It is one of the five ranks of British nobility and peerage, which, in descending order, are duke, marquess, earl, viscount, and baron.

In the feudal system of Europe, a baron was a “man” who pledged his loyalty and service to his superior in return for land that he could pass to his heirs. The superior, sovereign in his principality, held his lands “of no one”—i.e., independently—and the baron was his tenant-in-chief. In early feudal times the baron in turn, in a process of subinfeudation, might have had his own subordinate barons. This practice was discontinued in England when King Edward I recognized the political and fiscal dangers it posed.

## **How about Rolfe? Was he real?**

### **Also NO!**

Both Rolph and Baroness Elsa were created for the film to add dramatic tension.

Unfortunately.

The Hitler Youth, however, was very real. Read more about it later in the casebook.





## Selections from

# Movie vs. Reality: The Real Story of the Von Trapp Family

By Joan Gearin

I first saw the movie *The Sound of Music* as a young child, probably in the late 1960s. I liked the singing, and Maria was so pretty and kind! As I grew older, more aware of world history, and saturated by viewing the movie at least once yearly, I was struck and annoyed by the somewhat sanitized story of the von Trapp family it told, as well as the bad 1960s hairdos and costumes. "It's not historically accurate!" I'd protest, a small archivist in the making. In the early 1970s I saw Maria von Trapp herself on Dinah Shore's television show, and boy, was she not like the Julie Andrews version of Maria! She didn't look like Julie, and she came across as a true force of nature. In thinking about the fictionalized movie version of Maria von Trapp as compared to this very real Maria von Trapp, I came to realize that the story of the von Trapp family was probably something closer to human, and therefore much more interesting, than the movie led me to believe.

Part of the story of the real von Trapp family can be found in the records of the National Archives. When they fled the Nazi regime in Austria, the von Trapps traveled to America. Their entry into the United States and their subsequent applications for citizenship are documented in the holdings of the National Archives and Records Administration.

## Fact from Fiction

- While *The Sound of Music* was generally based on the first section of Maria's book *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers* (published in 1949), there were many alterations and omissions.
- Maria came to the von Trapp family in 1926 as a tutor for one of the children, Maria, who was recovering from scarlet fever, not as governess to all the children.
- Maria and Georg married in 1927, 11 years before the family left Austria, not right before the Nazi takeover of Austria.
- Maria did not marry Georg von Trapp because she was in love with him. As she said in her autobiography *Maria*, she fell in love with the children at first sight, not their father. When he asked her to marry him, she was not sure if she should abandon her religious calling but was advised by the nuns to do God's will and marry Georg. "I really and truly was not in love. I liked him but didn't love him. However, I loved the children, so in a way I really married the children. . . . [B]y and by I learned to love him more than I have ever loved before or after."
- There were 10, not 7 von Trapp children.

- The names, ages, and sexes of the children were changed.
- The family was musically inclined before Maria arrived, but she did teach them to sing madrigals.
- Georg, far from being the detached, cold-blooded patriarch of the family who disapproved of music, as portrayed in the first half of *The Sound of Music*, was actually a gentle, warmhearted parent who enjoyed musical activities with his family. While this change in his character might have made for a better story in emphasizing Maria's healing effect on the von Trapps, it distressed his family greatly.
- The family did not secretly escape over the Alps to freedom in Switzerland, carrying their suitcases and musical instruments. As daughter Maria said in a 2003 interview printed in *Opera News*, "We did tell people that we were going to America to sing. And we did not climb over mountains with all our heavy suitcases and instruments. We left by train, pretending nothing."
- The von Trapps traveled to Italy, not Switzerland. Georg was born in Zadar (now in Croatia), which at that time was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Zadar became part of Italy in 1920, and Georg was thus an Italian citizen, and his wife and children as well. The family had a contract with an American booking agent when they left Austria. They contacted the agent from Italy and requested fare to America.
- Instead of the fictional Max Detweiler, pushy music promoter, the von Trapps' priest, the Reverend Franz Wasner, acted as their musical director for over 20 years.
- Though she was a caring and loving person, Maria wasn't always as sweet as the fictional Maria. She tended to erupt in angry outbursts consisting of yelling, throwing things, and slamming doors. Her feelings would immediately be relieved and good humor restored, while other family members, particularly her husband, found it less easy to recover. In her 2003 interview, the younger Maria confirmed that her stepmother "had a terrible temper. . . . And from one moment to the next, you didn't know what hit her. We were not used to this. But we took it like a thunderstorm that would pass, because the next minute she could be very nice."

### **The Real von Trapps**

Georg von Trapp, born in 1880, became a national hero as a captain in the Austrian navy during World War I. He commanded submarines with valor and received the title of "Ritter" (knight), and later baron, as a reward for his heroic accomplishments. Georg married Agathe Whitehead, the granddaughter of Robert Whitehead, the inventor of the torpedo, in 1912. They had seven children together: Rupert, 1911–1992; Agathe, 1913–[2010]; Maria, 1914–[2014]; Werner, 1915–

[2007]; Hedwig, 1917–1972; Johanna, 1919–1994; and Martina, 1921–1951. After World War I, Austria lost all of its seaports, and Georg retired from the navy. His wife died in 1922 of scarlet fever. The family was devastated by her death and unable to bear living in a place where they had been so happy, Georg sold his property in Pola (now Pula, Croatia) and bought an estate in Salzburg.

Maria Augusta Kutschera was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1905. She was orphaned as a young child and was raised as an atheist and socialist by an abusive relative. While attending the State Teachers' College of Progressive Education in Vienna, she accidentally attended a Palm Sunday service, believing it to be a concert of Bach music, where a priest was speaking. Years later she recalled in her autobiography *Maria*, "Now I had heard from my uncle that all of these Bible stories were inventions and old legends, and that there wasn't a word of truth in them. But the way this man talked just swept me off my feet. I was completely overwhelmed." Soon after, Maria graduated from college, and as a result of her religious awakening, she entered the Benedictine Abbey of Nonnberg in Salzburg as a novice. While she struggled with the unaccustomed rules and discipline, she considered that "These . . . two years were really necessary to get my twisted character and my overgrown self-will cut down to size."

However, her health suffered from not getting the exercise and fresh air to which she was accustomed. When Georg von Trapp approached the Reverend Mother of the Abbey seeking a teacher for his sick daughter, Maria was chosen, partly because of her training and skill as a teacher, but also because of concern for her health. She was supposed to remain with the von Trapps for 10 months, at the end of which she would formally enter the convent.

Maria tutored young Maria and developed a caring and loving relationship with all the children. She enjoyed singing with them and getting them involved in outdoor activities. During this time, Georg fell in love with Maria and asked her to stay with him and become a second mother to his children. Of his proposal, Maria said, "God must have made him word it that way because if he had only asked me to marry him I might not have said yes." Maria Kutschera and Georg von Trapp married in 1927. They had three children together: Rosmarie, 1929–[2022]; Eleonore, 1931–[2021]; and Johannes, 1939–.

The family lost most of its wealth through the worldwide depression when their bank failed in the early 1930s. Maria tightened belts all around by dismissing most of the servants and taking in boarders. It was around this time that they began considering making the family hobby of singing into a profession. Georg was reluctant for the family to perform in public, "but accepted it as God's will that they sing for others," daughter Eleonore said in a 1978 Washington Post interview. "It almost hurt him to have his family onstage, not from a snobbish view, but more from a protective one." As depicted in *The Sound of Music*, the family won first place in the Salzburg Music Festival in 1936 and became successful, singing Renaissance and Baroque music, madrigals, and folk songs all across Europe.

When the Nazis annexed Austria in 1938, the von Trapps realized that they were on thin ice with a regime they abhorred. Georg not only refused to fly the Nazi flag on their house, but he also declined a naval command and a request to sing at Hitler's birthday party. They were also becoming aware of the Nazis' anti-religious propaganda and policies, the pervasive fear that those around them could be acting as spies for the Nazis, and the brainwashing of children

against their parents. They weighed staying in Austria and taking advantage of the enticements the Nazis were offering—greater fame as a singing group, a medical doctor's position for Rupert, and a renewed naval career for Georg—against leaving behind everything they knew—their friends, family, estate, and all their possessions. They decided that they could not compromise their principles and left.

Traveling with their musical conductor, Rev. Franz Wasner, and secretary, Martha Zochbauer, they went by train to Italy in June, later to London, and by September were on a ship to New York to begin a concert tour in Pennsylvania. Son Johannes was born in January 1939 in Philadelphia.

When their six months visitors' visas expired, they went on a short Scandinavian tour and returned to New York in October 1939. They were held at Ellis Island for investigation by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, apparently because when asked by an official how long they intended to stay, instead of saying "six months," as specified on their visas, Maria exclaimed, "Oh, I am so glad to be here—I never want to leave again!" The Story of the Trapp Family Singers notes that they were released after a few days and began their next tour.

In the early 1940s the family settled in Stowe, Vermont, where they bought a farm. They ran a music camp on the property when they were not on tour. In 1944, Maria and her stepdaughters Johanna, Martina, Maria, Hedwig, and Agathe applied for U.S. citizenship by filing declarations of intention at the U.S. District Court in Burlington, Vermont. Georg apparently never filed to become a citizen; Rupert and Werner were naturalized while serving in the U.S. armed forces during World War II; Rosmarie and Eleonore derived citizenship from their mother; and Johannes was born in the United States and was a citizen in his own right. Georg died in 1947 and was buried in the family cemetery on the property. Those who had applied for citizenship achieved it in 1948. The Trapp Family Lodge (which is still operating today) opened to guests in 1950. While fame and success continued for the Trapp Family Singers, they decided to stop touring in 1955. The group consisted mostly of non-family members because many of the von Trapps wanted to pursue other endeavors, and only Maria's iron will had kept the group together for so long.

In 1956, Maria, Johannes, Rosmarie, and daughter Maria went to New Guinea to do missionary work. Later, Maria ran the Trapp Family Lodge for many years. Of the children, Rupert was a medical doctor; Agathe was kindergarten teacher in Maryland; Maria was a missionary in New Guinea for 30 years; Werner was a farmer; Hedwig taught music; Johanna married and eventually returned to live in Austria; Martina married and died in childbirth; Rosmarie and Eleonore both settled in Vermont; and Johannes managed the Trapp Family Lodge. Maria died in 1987 and was buried alongside Georg and Martina.

### **The von Trapps and The Sound of Music**

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The resulting films, *Die Trapp-Familie* (1956), and a sequel, *Die Trapp-Familie in Amerika* (1958), were quite successful. The American rights were bought from the German producers. The family had very little input in either the play or the movie *The Sound of Music*. As a courtesy, the producers of the play listened to some of Maria's suggestions, but no substantive contributions were accepted.

How did the von Trapps feel about *The Sound of Music*? While Maria was grateful that there wasn't any extreme revision of the story she wrote in *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*, and that she herself was represented fairly accurately (although Mary Martin and Julie Andrews "were too gentle-like girls out of Bryn Mawr," she told the *Washington Post* in 1978), she wasn't pleased with the portrayal of her husband. The children's reactions were variations on a theme: irritation about being represented as people who only sang lightweight music, the simplification of the story, and the alterations to Georg von Trapp's personality. As Johannes von Trapp said in a 1998 *New York Times* interview, "it's not what my family was about. . . . [We were] about good taste, culture, all these wonderful upper-class standards that people make fun of in movies like 'Titanic.' We're about environmental sensitivity, artistic sensitivity. 'Sound of Music' simplifies everything. I think perhaps reality is at the same time less glamorous but more interesting than the myth."





# **An Unclaimed Country: The Austrian Image in American Film and the Sociopolitics of *The Sound of Music***

**by Robert von Dassanowsky**

Cinema's manipulative power as a tool in the enforcement of ideology came of age in the mid-twentieth century and has never abated. To counter the conflict and discordance of intellectualism, the cinematic image as vision provided the ultimate manipulated truth, the so-called "proof" of the primacy of the fascist order for Hitler, less so for Mussolini and Stalin. Opposing the bourgeois langue, is the historical "inevitability" of the fascist visual, which offers the audience the hermetically sealed reflection of required social and political behavior, Leni Riefenstahl's 1934 Nazi Party Congress film, *Triumph des Willens*, provided a nearly silent tapestry of National Socialism embedded in the recast images of German Romantic painting, architectural emblems of German history, and pseudo-religious, even messianic representation of the leader. Arguments have already been made rejecting a specific fascist aesthetic in this film; nevertheless, the very medium cannot avoid presenting what Walter Benjamin understood to be the ideological platform of fascism, a false totality.

Perhaps one of the more negative aspects of film's influence on the world audience is the conveyance of a simplistic good/bad dichotomy. National and international stereotypes ranging from examples of subtle distinction to virulent racism have always been the easy danger of cinema. Here, also, a history written by the victors is undeniable and tends to remain emotional fodder. Much of the militaristic German that the world seems to know, arose from American and other Western dominant film aimed at battling the Kaiser and Hitler — but also from the constructs of Nazi propaganda film. It is no wonder then that international cinema continues to present a Nazi stereotype even when dealing with German characters in an era prior to National Socialism.

And what of Austria and the Austrian? Most English-speaking audiences would not know how to respond. If they are wise enough to know that Austrians speak German not Austrian and are found in Central Europe not in the Tasmanian Sea, they would equate Austria with Germany and perhaps be partially correct. European audiences might fare better, but even sharing a common history, the clichés would no doubt arise: Emperor Franz Joseph and his beautiful but troubled Empress Elisabeth or "Sissi," Strauss waltzes, palaces, pastry, and the Alpine world. In short, a collection of indelible images as trivialized and promoted for tourism by contemporary Austria.

No doubt, the Habsburg monarchy in all its grandeur, class distinction and multiculturalism is the staple image for pre-1918 Austria throughout the history of international cinema. Whether we view the Hollywood translation of Viennese operetta, a historical epic, or a vitriolic parody of court life found in the silent films of Austrian émigré Erich von Stroheim, there is an irresistible Kakanien.

that is differentiated from any romanticized German past. Despite the differentiation of the First Austrian Republic, the Austrofascist period, the Anschluss, and the difficult postwar years, Anglo-American films depicting Austria from the 1920s through the Second World War, manage to conjure the Danubian monarchy and offer an ambiguous Austrian type who could be at once polyglot Viennese or provincial Tyrolean, aristocratic or common, and eventually a pawn in German hegemony. In short: a vague non-type. The 1942 film *Once Upon a Honeymoon* with Ginger Rogers and Cary Grant, is a prime example of this, as anachronistic images and types of an aristocratic Austria that ended in 1918 still seduces the social-climbing American heroine in 1940s Vienna, until she realizes that in Hitler's Reich there can be no other ideology but Nazism.

Even Hollywood-Austrian Billy Wilder, whose gritty black and white Berlin rubble comedy, *A Foreign Affair* of 1946, which featured Marlene Dietrich as a seductive ex-Nazi in a city of black marketeering and guilt evasion, could not find a similar realistic Austria for the screen. The following year he offered *The Emperor Waltz*, a romantic imperial era comedy of aristocratic misalliance and Franz Joseph's puppies, filmed in a Hollywood back lot and in Colorado (as stand ins for Schönbrunn Palace and the Alps) in garish, postcard-like Technicolor landscapes with Bing Crosby singing Strauss. What Wilder could not, perhaps would not do, Carol Reed accomplished, but his bleak vision of a war torn and occupied Vienna in his 1949 *The Third Man* is clearly an exception among the other films on Austria from the 1940s to the 1960s. There are several remakes of *The Great Waltz* and *The Merry Widow* as well as Carlo Ponti's *Emperor Waltz* rehash, *A Breath of Scandal* (1962), complete with new songs by renowned Viennese operetta composer Robert Stolz. Austria as a neutral site between cold-war blocs adds a new element to the image: Vienna or even Salzburg becomes the center for spies, neo-Nazis and communist refugees in such films spanning *The Red Danube* (1949) to *The Salzburg Connection* (1972). Even though there are at least three treatments of the Mayerling tragedy<sup>2</sup> spanning the 1920s to the mid 1960s from German, French and British cameras, contemporary Austria and the Austrian becomes even less defined than ever. Palaces and Alps still dominate, and the people and nation seem to be defined as what they are not: neither Germans nor Eastern Europeans, neither an influential political state, nor one that fulfills the immense cultural legacy of its imperial past. In the 1960s and 70s, Austrian directors who had fled Nazism for Hollywood<sup>3</sup> attempted to offer images of an Austria that were taboo or at least highly controversial within Austria. Otto Preminger's *The Cardinal* (1963) gives us an Austria that cannot escape the mourning for its imperial past, a naive Cardinal Innitzer who miscalculates the meaning of Hitler's Anschluss, and opera star Wilma Lipp singing Mozart to resistant Catholics while the Hitler Youth vandalizes the archbishop's residence. Fred Zinnemann's *Julia* depicts a violent Civil War of 1934, and draws an over-simplistic comparison of the 1934-38 Dollfuss/Schuschnigg clerical-authoritarian corporate state with Nazi Germany to favor the film's cause of anti-fascism. I will return to this period in Austrian history in the discussion of *The Sound of Music*. More recently, Dr. Elsa Schneider (Alison Doody), an ambivalent Austrian is caught between the Holy Grail and the swastika in Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Holy Grail* (1989). Perhaps given the fallout of the Waldheim era,

Spielberg's later *Schindler's List* (1993), which divides the film into a battle of morality between the good and bad Nazi, offers the German Schindler as hero and humanist; the nominally Austrian Amon Goetz is the psychopathic concentration camp commandant.

In more contemporary themed films, Austria is a romantic backdrop much as Paris had been in "Golden Age" Hollywood film. This ranges from the James Bond opus, *The Living Daylights* (1987) to Richard Linklater's Generation X adventure, *Before Sunrise* (1995). Milos Forman's 1984 Czechoslovakian/American film of Peter Shaffer's fictionalized Mozart and Salieri conflict, *Amadeus*,<sup>4</sup> and the 1994 Beethoven biopic, *Immortal Beloved*, which like *Amadeus* manages to show a more realistic picture of historical Austria than of its composer subjects, brought the classical musical image of Austria on film briefly back into style.

#### *Nation as Film/Film as Nation*

There is, however, a cinematic representative of Austria that is internationally appreciated, but it is a collection of fictionalized images most Austrians have never seen. *The Sound of Music*,<sup>5</sup> the 1965 Hollywood film based on the Broadway musical by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II, and directed by Robert Wise,<sup>6</sup> has consistently been one of the largest money-making films in history and one of the most popular with world audiences. Although honored with many film awards including the Academy Award for Best Picture, and having been hailed for its superb quality as an entertainment film, it has never been appreciated or taken seriously enough by film critics. The source of the original musical was the 1949 book *The Story of the Trapp Family* by Maria von Trapp,<sup>7</sup> which also served as the basis for two West German features, *Die Trapp-Familie* (1956) and *Die Trapp-Familie in Amerika* (1958),<sup>8</sup> both helmed by German/Austrian director Wolfgang Liebeneiener. The narrative structure of the first installment, scripted by Georg Hurdalek, appears to have influenced both the stage and film musical and Hurdalek's name was later added post-release to the credits of the Robert Wise feature.

The film is substantially different than the musical play it is based on, primarily because the director has chosen to interpret the musical cinematically rather than remain loyal to the stage version. This required writer Ernest Lehman to reduce the characters and songs (although two new ones were composed for the film by Richard Rodgers), and revise the overall concept of what the fictionalized story of the von Trapp Family could represent. The film borrows heavily from the Austrian and German Heimatfilm, a genre popular in the from the 1930s to the 1960s, which ranged from provincial dramas that highlighted the idyllic countryside and emphasized conservative and Christian social values (National Socialist values during the Third Reich) to later comedies that spoofed the originals.<sup>9</sup> *The Sound of Music* also recasts the Bergfilm (mountain film) tradition,<sup>10</sup> from the mountain-centered salvation that opens and closes the film, to the German Romantic notion of nature's purity and urban/or lowland corruption. Since the 1980s and 90s, the Bergfilm genre has found a resurrection of sorts in American cinema. The interrelationship between the characters too, echoes the constellation of the German Enlightenment dramas of G. E. Lessing and Friedrich Schiller, complete with a symbolic father/son conflict and various misalliances.

As Linda Schulte-Sasse explores in her study of National Socialist film, the use of the 18th century Enlightenment to valorize bourgeois culture in Nazi cinema, naturally contradicted the politics of National Socialism, but the appeal and familiarity of its underlying literary paradigms guaranteed an illusion of wholeness and believability.<sup>12</sup> Shifted in meaning to serve Nazi ideology, these literary/cinematic topoi are also used in Wise's *Sound of Music* to create a hind-sighted anti-Nazi film. Naturally, the German Enlightenment types are also at the root of the film's universality and appeal.

But placing theoretical concerns aside for the moment, it must be said that here is a film every Austrian should see, if only to discover what the world understands about Austria and the Austrians. As one of the most widely seen films in cinema history, it carries the strongest representation of Austria to the world, and as such, *The Sound of Music* is perhaps most influential in creating recognizable typing of the nation and its values. What is most fascinating about this seemingly trivialized resolution to the vague image of Austria in world cinema is the realization that the Austria presented in the film has hardly been the one which the Second Republic has attempted to show the world in its neutralist, Alpine republic identity. Nor has the topic of the anti-Nazi authoritarian state, the 1934-38 Austrofascist *Ständestaat*<sup>13</sup> of the Chancellors Engelbert Dollfuss (1892-1934) and Kurt von Schuschnigg (1897-1977), found its way into the self-representation of Austria since 1945; it has in fact been avoided, and its leaders often maligned, in official as well as in artistic presentations. In Austria, *The Sound of Music* is allowed to represent the nation and especially Salzburg,<sup>14</sup> and although it is rejected by critics for its Hollywood reductionism/trivialization of Austrian social and political history, it remains largely tolerated by those that have either not seen it or have not viewed it critically, as a positive foreign tribute to and even envoy of the nation.

The film is quite clearly an allegory for the Austrian *Ständestaat*, and casts an approving light on the era's very general atmosphere. The film does not take critical issue or specifically define the period politically, but sets the action in "The last golden years of the Thirties" a suggestion of doomed Austrian sovereignty and freedom rather than the strife of the First Republic. The film's two main characters who come to represent the Austrian nation and its struggle, Julie Andrews' Maria, a postulant in a convent and Christopher Plummer's Captain von Trapp form the very dualism of the *Ständestaat* ideology. Like postimperial Austria, the Trapp family, although living in the remnant Austrian aristocratic tradition, are motherless and alienated from purpose or direction. As a naval officer without an ocean (Austria having become landlocked with the new borders of 1918/19), and a landed aristocrat without a monarch, Georg von Trapp's identity and lifestyle is connected with the Habsburg past. He represents that conservative Austria which, from the inception of the First Republic through the *Ständestaat*, defined itself as Austrian author Alexander Lernet-Holenia labled it in his 1934 novel on the passing of the Empire, *Die Standarte* (The Standard): "was übrigblieb, als alles andre vergangen war" (that which remained after all else had disappeared)<sup>15</sup> His Austria is one defined by a multicultural, cosmopolitan empire, which, given its otherness to Germany even as a small republic, must continue to create an identity based in its Habsburg heritage. Von Trapp's Austrian nation is one of polyglot Mitteleuropa, not of a Greater-Germany and it is this

historical legitimism of the post-1918 Austrian state that von Trapp as aristocratic/conservative element of the *Ständestaat* locates his patriotism. Despite the international fame of the Trapp Family Singers, it is curious that in passively accepting and in capitalizing on *The Sound of Music*, Austria also accepts an officially disavowed regime (labeled in the film as “golden years”) and an elitist (aristocratic) representation of the nation.<sup>16</sup> But a representation of Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Austria is incomplete without the inclusion of the regime’s Catholic social philosophy influenced by the 1931 papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* and the clerico-corporate theories of Othmar Spann (1878-1950). It is the character of Maria as symbol of Catholicism that completes this sociopolitical allegory. Her *joie de vivre* and her religious beliefs nurture the children and bring substance to their lives. She helps the Captain channel his mourning for a “world that is slowly fading away” into an effective role model for his children and a progressive and pragmatic stance in dealing with the peril to his family.

The Maria/Captain allegory also exists on the class-conscious level. Enamored in the demimondaine Baroness Elsa Schraeder (Eleanor Parker), Captain von Trapp seeks to escape the loss of his true love (his wife, but also Old Austria) in a hedonistic, aristocratic circle. The Baroness is presented as a wealthy socialite who cares little for the von Trapp children, although her love of the Captain appears to be honest. Not unlike the hero’s discarded aristocratic love interest in such German Enlightenment works as Lessing’s *Emilia Galotti* (1772) and Schiller’s *Kabale und Liebe* (1784), her goal is social continuity rather than emotional gratification or self-realization. The Captain’s fascination with her is equally a social refuge — into the false security of class and into nostalgia. Their impossible union in this allegory would represent an unrealistic redux of an elitist and mythic past, something the *Ständestaat* had attempted to avoid by encouraging a *volkisch* mass culture to balance the cosmopolitan imperial heritage that made Austria a distinct entity from Germany. Von Trapp instead chooses a life with Maria, who grounds his past in a realistic present. The joining of Maria’s Alpine, rural, and folk persona with the Captain’s aristocratic, high-culture and suggested Viennese connection spans not only the geography of postimperial Austria, but the *Ständestaat* mission for Austria: sovereignty with an identity based in Habsburg heritage, Catholic social values, Viennese high-culture but also Alpine-aimed *Volkskultur*; evolution not revolution. Indeed, Goethe, and later Thomas Mann viewed the type of class union of the Georg-Maria misalliance as a progressive move toward a renewed *esprit* of the nation.

*The Sound of Music* manages to represent most levels of the social structure, and does not shy from the bourgeois opportunism of Max Detweiler (Richard Haydn), the impresario, who is closely associated with the decadence of the Baroness and whose passive fatalism about Austria’s demise angers the patriotic Captain von Trapp. Most important is that the “enemy” in this film is not an outsider. The National Socialists are all Austrians, and are already visible in a conspiracy as the film begins. These characters, ranging from minor employees to the middle class — the telegram messenger Rolf Gruber (Daniel Truhitte), the butler Franz (Gil Stuart) and Herr Zeller, the future Nazi Gauleiter,<sup>18</sup> signify the petit-bourgeois “pseudo-revolution” of Nazism. Zeller particularly attempts to voice the illusion of an autonomous Austria with a

specific mission within the Reich that Austria's Anschluss-Governor Artur Seyss-Inquart (1892-1946) held in attempting to create such anachronistic Austro-Hungarian sounding districts as the Reich Fortress of Belgrade and the Prinz Eugen Gau.

Hitler immediately rejected such seeming excursions into Habsburg history. One imagines that Zeller's absurd comment that "Nothing has changed in Austria. Austria is the same," will meet with similar damnation from Berlin as did Seyss-Inquart's naivete. The von Trapp children also figure into the ideological battle. Their lie about picking berries is punished by the Captain, as he would punish all those who join in the lie of Austria's role in Germany; his rebuke of Zeller at his ball pits a notion of Austria as a land of culture, represented by the voices of innocent children "raised in song" against the "ugly German threats" of a militaristic and expansionist Reich. Interestingly, one of the major successes in Austrian film during the Schuschnigg era was *Singende Jugend* (*Singing Youth*, 1936), an Austrian/Dutch co-production directed by Max Neufeld. It that promoted just this sort of Catholic Austrian youth "raised in song" against the unspoken reality of the Nazi militarist threat. Featuring the Vienna Boys Choir on an adventure in the Tyrol, the film which begins as a neo-realistic Austrian social drama about an orphaned boy Toni (Martin Lojda) living in poverty with his street-musician friend (Hans Olden). Upon one day hearing the Vienna Boys Choir and dreams of joining them, and his friend who has become an ersatz-father, convinces the rector of the Vienna Boys Choir school (Ferdinand Maierhofer) and a nun, Sister Maria (Julia Janssen) to accept the boy. On a summer trip with the choirboys to the Tyrol, Toni risks his life to defend the innocent Sister Maria, (who has become his mother-figure) from suspicion of theft. He recovers from his injuries to find himself welcomed into his new life and home. The film is very much in tune with the *Ständestaat* ideology, suggesting the benefits of discipline, a specifically Austrian culture/tradition, and of course, Catholicism. Set against Austria's highest mountain, the Grossglockner, the film also managed to display the public works of the regime — the newly constructed Grossglockner Highway. *Singende Jugend*, which may have influenced the later troubled-but-good orphan-boy genre in Hollywood films, such as Norman Taurog's *Boys Town* (1938) and the former Austro-Hungarian Michael Curtiz's *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) was a bit like the nun and child-laden *Sound of Music* of its day, being a major success with audiences in France, England and even Czechoslovakia, where it was voted best foreign film of 1936. Its ideology and non-certified "Aryan" Austrian and exile German and cast and crew made it forbidden for import into Germany.<sup>20</sup>

### *Sites/Sights of Sovereignty*

Wise's *Sound of Music* hosts a battle of symbols to challenge any semiotician. Captain von Trapp is defined by a white Austrian decoration in the shape of a crusader's cross or *Kruckenkreuz* around his neck, and displays the Austrian flag in his entry hall during the ball. The counterpoint is the Nazi flag that is hung against his knowledge outside his door after the Anschluss, which he tears down. Here are simple opposites of the Manichean struggle of light against dark, white against black. The Austrofascist Chancellor Dollfuss believed the *Kruckenkreuz* to be a Christian symbol that would show Austria to be a "better" Germany in



Von Trapp, who represents the imperial patriarchy, is shown at the head of the family table, the microcosm of the nation. Behind him towers a decorative obelisk, at once a phallic symbol of leadership and a tombstone. It is clear von Trapp's monarchical or authoritarian leadership is related to a dead or dying Austria. From this table rushes his eldest daughter Liesl (Charmian Carr), for a secret rendezvous in the gazebo with Rolf. The couple's class difference mirrors that of von Trapp and Maria, in the typical Enlightenment constellation, and within the freedom of nature, away from the site of the patriarchal control, where von Trapp and Maria also eventually declare their love for each other. Liesl and Rolf are a sociopolitical mismatch that cannot be overcome. Rolf tells Liesl that "Your father is so Austrian .... Some people think we should be German." Indeed, Rolf loses interest in Liesl after the Anschluss affords him a new uniform, male camaraderie and a gun. Von Trapp and Rolf reenact the father/son conflict common to German Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) and twentieth-century Expressionism, but in *The Sound of Music*, the "son's" new order is only a false liberation from the Old Order, in the form of Nazism. In a message reminiscent of the works of Austrian Biedermeier dramatist Franz Grillparzer, progress is suspect, conservative lack of change, as represented in von Trapp, is associated with goodness and freedom. The definitive father/son struggle occurs in the catacombs of the church, where the von Trapp family hides from the storm troopers who intend to arrest the Captain for refusing his naval commission. Hiding behind the tombs, the family literally seeks shelter in, and is imperiled by the "past." Rolf discovers the hiding place and is confronted by von Trapp, who, in fatherly tones nearly convinces the boy of his wrong ideals. The ease in which von Trapp substitutes himself for Nazism (and the unseen Führer), suggests a lost generation of men seeking patriarchal structure. The controversial former Austrian President, Kurt Waldheim recalls his own identification with an infant republic which in 1918 was "set adrift, its mighty parent dead,"<sup>24</sup> and implicates Austrian attraction to the strong leader to battle the isolation and introversion of the First Republic. Von Trapp takes the gun from Rolf's hands in a re-order of phallic authority and precipitates the boy's panic and the subsequent response of the storm troopers.

The very sites of the film have strong geopolitical value: von Trapp's Salzburg, unlike Baroness Schraeder's Vienna, is untainted by politics, military, memories of war and revolution. Historically a bishopric, it is an ideal symbol of Catholic values and historical independence. Von Trapp's identity is shifted after the Anschluss: the order regarding his naval commission comes from the center of the new Greater German Reich, Berlin, (Vienna having been degraded to a provincial capital) and it requests he report to Bremerhaven, a Protestant northern German port city that has little in common with *Terra Austria*. Similarly, on a microcosmic level, the action of the film prior to the Anschluss occurs in locations that support the Austrian ideology of the *Ständestaat*: the von Trapp manor house, Maria's convent, and the cathedral. Exterior shots are in places of idyllic freedom — the mountains, and of Austrian history — around Salzburg and Mirabell Palace. Cinematographically, strong parallelism contrasts Catholic Austria and its fall to Nazism. Maria's wedding march and the pealing of many joyous bells dissolve into the single, dull bell,

announcing the Anschluss. This is immediately followed by a wide, aerial shot of the orderly columns of Nazi soldiers marching across a plaza. Maria's white draped movement toward the altar is similarly shot from above, her long veil makes her resemble a butterfly. The soldiers, however, resemble ants. Indeed, Maria's costumes reflect her emotional growth as the evolution from worm to cocoon to butterfly: she begins in black habit and presents herself to the Captain in an ugly earth-toned burlap skirt and jacket. This is followed by lighter but still dull-colored dirndl patterns and the blue chiffon dress of the party, which is briefly replaced by the habit in her attempt to seek refuge from her feelings for the Captain. She returns in a more elegant, strong blue-green dress, ultimately replaced by the butterfly of the wedding gown and the striking yellow suit she wears upon her return from her honeymoon. In this color, one of associated with Empress Maria Theresa, the Habsburg flag, and Schönbrunn Palace, Maria stands by her husband's side in resistance to Nazism. He wears his typical Austrian country costume or Tracht, a patriotic uniform-like look favored by aristocrats. When the butler, Franz, is briefly seen peering from an upper floor window at Zeller's confrontation with the escaping family, he is garbed in von Trapp's or a similar Tracht, signifying him as the new lord of the manor. It is a clear reference to the lawless and violent National Socialist expropriation of the property of Jews, Fatherland Front leaders and members, monarchists, socialists, and other anti-Nazis in Austria beginning in March 1938. But it is no longer the symbolic house of Austria that Franz and his like have acquired and want represent. Their "ownership" has degraded it to the Ostmark (Eastern March) or later the Alpen- und Donaugau (Alpine and Danube Gau), a province within the Reich, renamed once to wipe Austria off the map, the second time to eradicate any lingering reference to its Habsburg history.

The space following the Anschluss is claustrophobic, dominated by tight and angled shots within the von Trapp house and by shadowy nighttime exteriors. The festival appearance is haunting for its ominous lack of attractive surroundings. The arches of the ancient outdoor stage and the silhouettes of guards recall the Roman coliseum, a pagan and colorless world now overriding the sensuous baroque Christianity of Salzburg. In their simple loden "travelling clothes," the von Trapps have lost their facade of wealth, class, and even regional characteristics. They are now indistinguishable from any other family — as the everyman and woman of an Austria no longer on the map. Max Detweiler's emcee duty and the Nazi uniforms that season the audience delivers us into the "show" (e.g. Nuremberg party rallies) of the New Order. Indeed, there is even a transfiguration of the archways, halls and yards of the convent in the following scenes of Nazi infiltration. They are dark, funereal, in mourning. Sunlight does not return until the family makes their way across the mountain (albeit the wrong one) to freedom — a mirroring of the opening shot of Maria's joy. As the audience descended from the clouds to meet the postulant rejoicing in the purity of nature, we now rise again with her new family, in a Romantic transcendence of lowland corruption worthy of Romantic German authors such as Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801) and Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857)<sup>26</sup> or even of Leni Riefenstahl's 1945/54 film, *Tiefland*.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the film, like those in German and Austrian cinema of the past that have utilized the Enlightenment and Romantic period conventions, appeals to the global audience for these very stylistic reasons. The music is arguably among the best creations of American Broadway theater and of its redoubtable composers, Rogers and Hammerstein. The waltzes, ländler, foxtrots and folk song imitations draw on Mozart, Schubert, Strauss and Lehar and the narrative accommodates an irresistible Hollywood formula for popularity — nuns, children, a love story and heroism couched in faith. Yet *The Sound of Music* is more than these cliché elements that compose its melodramatic form. There are lucid moments of sociopolitical and historical reflection not found in the dying musical film genre until *Cabaret* (1972) explored the final days of the German Weimar Republic almost a decade later.

## Conclusion

*The Sound of Music* is representative of conservative American cold war ideology of the 1960s more than of Austria in any particular period, according to Jacqueline Vansant,<sup>28</sup> and recent academic examinations of the film in Austria discount it as the end of a long line of Hollywood *Dirndl* and *Lederhosen* operettas, as well as a projection of American, not Austrian values: idealized rural life, Protestant work ethic, family values (especially during the “generation gap” of the 1960s), the triumph of Christianity over atheism, as well as the “Cinderella” and the “successful immigrant” myths.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, its use to promote Salzburg, or rather Salzburg’s indulgence of tourists who seek not the city but film fantasy, is nevertheless seen by Salzburg as an opportunity to introduce its reality to those searching for a cinematic landscape. Unclaimed but tolerated by Austria, *The Sound of Music* has put somewhat of a stronger albeit still limited and anachronistic face on the non-image of Austrians in American popular culture. Through its popularity, the imperial Austrian fantasies of Hollywood have been supplanted, replaced by a bittersweet nostalgia Austria generates even in its current self-representation to the world, and not without reason or right. Despite the American ideological angles, the social influences of the film’s production decade, the kitschification of Austria and its culture, the film nevertheless generates its central allegory from the real identities and histories of Maria Augusta Kutschera and Georg von Trapp. As a response to those who would claim only Hollywood production reductionism and/or Austrian reception revisionism, one can say: this couple is Austria too, one Austria of many.

## **selections from**

# **The Hitler Youth**

### **from The National Holocaust Museum**

The Nazi party intended that the population under its control, and future generations, would have absolute loyalty to Adolf Hitler, the regime, and Nazi ideals. To accomplish this aim, complete indoctrination of children into Nazi ideology was a priority, and the youth of Nazi Germany were a particular focus of the Nazi regime's propaganda. The Hitler Youth also formed a key part of the strategy, intending to grow its members into disciplined adults who knew and saw the world as dictated by the Nazi regime.

The strategy of utilising youth groups in conjunction with propaganda targeted towards the youth, and a school curriculum designed to indoctrinate children was highly effective; members and former members of the Hitler Youth were among the most committed Nazis.



**The Hitler Youth Badge**

### **Origins**

The roots of the Hitler Youth begin before the Nazi's rise to power. From the 1920s children were targeted by the Nazi Party for exposure to their ideas, such as race consciousness. They were prepared for potential future entry into the SA; the Nazi Party's paramilitary like organisation, the Storm Troopers (Sturmabteilung). Conformity and loyalty were of paramount importance.

The original youth movement was established in 1926, and developed into a distinct organisation to train children intended to become Nazis of the future. After Adolf Hitler's rise to power as Chancellor of Germany in 1933, the move towards incorporation of all other youth groups such as Catholic groups, and outlaw of the Boy Scouts, ensured inclusion of as many children as possible.

In December 1936, the Law on the Hitler Youth decreed that German children should join the Hitler Youth. Further legislation called the Regulations on implementing the Law on the Hitler Youth made membership mandatory in 1939. These laws required all children who fitted Nazi racial ideals to serve in the Hitler Youth from the ages of ten to eighteen. Specifically, boys aged between 10 and 14 would form the Deutschen Jungvolk [DJ] and those between 14 and 18 would form the Hitler Youth. Membership increased to 5.4 million children prior to 1939.

The Law on the Hitler Youth was intended to ensure, through academic and physical education, that the future of Nazism was secure in the hands of an ideologically and racially aware youth. The law mandated who had to join, and who was prohibited from joining. As well as racial prohibitions, children who were struggling in school and deemed unable to progress without exclusion were not required to take part in the otherwise mandatory activities.

Parents who did not enrol their children into the Hitler Youth were penalised in conjunction with the law. A fine of 150 marks, or confinement, was the penalty for not registering children by the March 15, deadline each year. Preventing children attending Hitler Youth meetings could have led to imprisonment.

### **The League of German Girls**

Children were split into groups based on their age and gender. Girls between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one would join The League of German Girls, known as the BDM (Bund Deutsche Mädel), while girls between the ages of ten and fourteen joined the Jungmädelbund (JM). These were designed to prepare young women for their futures as mothers in the Third Reich. The BDM focused on educating young women in sports, racial awareness, and community work in order to prepare them for their role as mothers.

### **Other Youth groups**

Catholic Youth groups were a popular part of German society prior to the rise of Nazism. Members of the Hitler Youth were known to harass members of these groups which faced pressure due to the Catholic Church's refusal to comply with the Hitler Youth regulations. Although the Concordat of 1933 did allow some protection for Catholic groups, by 1939 when the Hitler Youth became mandatory, many Catholic groups had been disbanded. Jewish youth groups including Maccabi Hatza'ir and Blau Weiss maintained large numbers of members through the interwar years. Following Adolf Hitler's rise to power, Jewish youth groups remained openly for a short time. However, by 1939 it became obvious that Jewish groups would not be tolerated.

Jazz groups were a large part of youth society in the inter war years. After 1933, the popular Swing Youth (Swingjugend) developed into a protest movement as the Nazi regime demanded boycotting of all 'alien' culture, including jazz music. Following the absorption of all other groups into the Hitler Youth, many members of former groups still met in secret at great risk to themselves.

### **Leadership of the Hitler Youth**

The leadership emphasised conformity throughout the Hitler Youth movement. The original leader of the Hitler Youth from the 1920s until 1931 was Kurt Gruber, however he was criticised due to the youth movement's slow growth comparative to the wider Nazi party. The movement gathered momentum under Baldur Von Schirach, who was appointed leader of the youth in the German Reich in 1933. At this time the movement grew and strengthened its militaristic atmosphere. In 1940 after criticism from other leading Nazi officials that Baldur Von Schirach would be incapable of creating a force as ardent as required by Adolf Hitler, Artur Axmann was given control. Although the Hitler Youth had been militarised before, Axmann introduced further practical training to the program, and took a more aggressive stance on the teaching of ideals. Artur Axmann remained in control of the movement until the end of the Second World War, where he commanded Hitler Youth members in the Battle of Berlin.

### **Activities**

Activities in the Hitler Youth were designed to further the aim of preparation of children for their futures in as the next generation of soldiers and mothers. They supported and enhanced the curriculum taught in schools, where all lessons were moulded around the Nazi understanding of history, biology, and geography. Children were taught about the world in a manner which justified the actions of the Nazi regime, and promoted conformity and obedience in all aspects of life.

Activities to extend the sense of belonging further indoctrinated children into the Nazi regime; the Courage Test (Mutprobe) involved carrying out a daunting task that varied from group to group, but normally involved jumping from height or diving into deep water. The completion of this test entitled members to carry the Hitler Youth dagger, that children who achieved this talked of it with pride and honour demonstrates the effectiveness of such measures as tools for indoctrination.

Programs were created for Hitler Youth members to train in either Motor, Marine or Flieger, leading them to a career in that area in the armed forces. Eventually members showing promise were further educated in the military school, potentially to join the SS.

### **Uniform**

Like other aspects of the Hitler Youth, the uniform was used to foster conformity and belonging through creating an atmosphere of oneness, and preventing any individual from appearing different. The paramilitary style of the uniform further enforced the militaristic methods of training used to prepare these children for their later lives; uniforms allowed the Hitler Youth to feel important, differentiating them from the rest of the community.



Under the initial leadership of Kurt Gruber in the 1920s, the uniform was introduced as a brown shirt, black shorts and the Hitler Youth armband (red with a white swastika) for the summer. Typically, a black belt, grey socks, a black scarf and brown cap was also worn as part of the uniform, further adding to the sense of belonging to the movement. A winter uniform was also created in 1934, consisting of black trousers, black jacket, brown shirt and black scarf.

### **The Second World War**

Members of the Hitler Youth were utilised towards the war effort, and to fulfil roles left by men conscripted into the armed forces. These included civic duties such as delivering letters, and aiding the emergency services. Teenage members also assisted the Luftwaffe with maintaining anti-aircraft defences, they were known as the Luftwaffenhelfer-Hitler Jugend and continued to wear the uniform of the regular Hitler Youth.

With Adolf Hitler having been in power from 1933 until 1945, and roots of the Nazi party and the Hitler Youth preceding this, many children had not known life before the Nazi regime. Some were young when the Nazis rose to power, and had experienced years of Nazi teachings and propaganda. Members and Former members of the Hitler Youth were amongst the most ardent fighters encountered by allied forces.

After the Second World War prominent Nazi officials and supporters were put on trial for their crimes. Baldur Von Schirach who had held multiple roles within the Nazi Party, including leader of the youth, was convicted of crimes against humanity.





# The Anschluss

## from The Jewish Virtual Library

The idea of an Anschluss (a united Austria and Germany that would form a “Greater Germany”) began after the unification of Germany excluded Austria and the German Austrians from the Prussian-dominated German Empire in 1871. In 1918, following the end of World War I and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the newly formed Republic of German-Austria attempted to form a union with Germany, but the Treaty of Saint Germain (September 10, 1919) and The Treaty of Versailles (June 28, 1919) stripped Austria of some of its territories, including the Sudetenland, and forbade both the union and the continued use of the name “German-Austria” (Deutschösterreich).

When the Nazis came to power, they were determined to bring ethnic Germans outside Germany into Greater Germany (the “Heim ins Reich” movement). Germany supported the Austrian National Socialist Party (Austrian Nazi Party), which failed to win any seats in the November 1930 general election but grew in popularity after Hitler came to power. The idea of Austria joining Germany also grew in popularity.

On July 25, 1934, Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss was assassinated by Austrian Nazis in a failed coup. Afterward, leading Austrian Nazis fled to Germany, but they continued to push for unification from there. The remaining Austrian Nazis engage in a terror campaign against Austrian governmental institutions, causing a death toll of more than 800 between 1934 and 1938.

Dollfuss was succeeded by Kurt Schuschnigg, who used the police to suppress Nazi supporters. Meanwhile, Hitler gave a speech at the Reichstag on May 21, 1935, saying “Germany neither intends nor wishes to interfere in the internal affairs of Austria, to annex Austria or to conclude an Anschluss.”

On July 11, 1936, Schuschnigg signed a treaty with Germany in which he agreed to the release of Nazis imprisoned in Austria and Germany promised to respect Austrian sovereignty. Under the terms of the Austro-German treaty, Austria declared itself a “German state” that would always follow Germany’s lead in foreign policy, and members of the “National Opposition” were allowed to enter the cabinet, in exchange for which the Austrian Nazis promised to cease their terrorist attacks against the government.

Hitler was not satisfied, however, and feared that Germany’s economic problems were causing it to fall behind in the arms race with Britain and France and that the only solution was to seize Austria and Czechoslovakia to plunder their economies. He demanded that Austria agree to a union, presenting Schuschnigg with a series of demands during a meeting at Berchtesgaden on February 12, 1938. Schuschnigg hoped to avoid the takeover of Austria and agreed to appoint Nazi sympathizers to positions of power in the government. The key appointment was that of Arthur Seyss-Inquart as Minister of Public Security. In return Hitler agreed to reaffirm his support for Austria’s national sovereignty.

Ominously, however, Hitler gave a speech before the Reichstag on February 20, 1938, in which he said, “The German Reich is no longer willing to tolerate the suppression of ten million Germans across its borders.”



Seyss-Inquart and Hitler with  
Himmler and Heydrich in Vienna,  
March 1938

On March 9, 1938, in the face of rioting by the small, but virulent, Austrian Nazi Party and ever-expanding German demands on Austria, Schuschnigg called a referendum on a union with Germany to be held on the 13th. Nevertheless, Hitler threatened to invade Austria and demanded Schuschnigg's resignation and the appointment of Seyss-Inquart as his replacement. Hitler's plan was for Seyss-Inquart to call immediately for German troops to rush to Austria's aid, restoring order and giving the invasion an air of legitimacy.

Hitler declared that the referendum would be subject to major fraud and that Germany would never accept it. In addition, the German ministry of propaganda issued press reports that riots had broken out in Austria and that large parts of the Austrian population were calling for German troops to restore order. Schuschnigg subsequently cancelled the referendum.

Schuschnigg desperately sought support for Austrian independence in the hours following the ultimatum. Realizing that neither France nor Britain was willing to offer assistance, Schuschnigg resigned on March 11, but President Wilhelm Miklas refused to appoint Seyss-Inquart as Chancellor. The following day, however, Miklas resigned and Seyss-Inquart was installed as Chancellor.

On the morning of March 12, 1938, the 8th Army of the German Wehrmacht crossed the border into Austria where it faced no resistance. The troops were greeted by cheering Austrians with Nazi salutes, Nazi flags, and flowers. That afternoon, Hitler crossed the border at his birthplace, Braunau am Inn, and later went to Linz where he was given an enthusiastic welcome.

Many Germans from both Austria and Germany welcomed the Anschluss as they saw it as completing the complex and long overdue German unification of all Germans united into one state. Hitler had originally intended to leave Austria as a puppet state with Seyss-Inquart as head of a pro-Nazi government. However, the overwhelming reception caused him to change course and absorb Austria into the Reich. On March 13, Seyss-Inquart announced the revocation of Article 88 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, which prohibited the unification of Austria and Germany.

Hitler's journey through Austria became a triumphal tour that climaxed in Vienna on March 15, 1938, when around 200,000 cheering German Austrians gathered around the Heldenplatz (Square of Heroes) to hear Hitler say that "The oldest eastern province of the German people shall be, from this point on, the newest bastion of the German Reich."

On April 10, 1938, a referendum was held asking Austrians: Do you agree with the reunification of Austria with the German Reich that was enacted on March 13, 1938, and do you vote for the list of our leader Adolf Hitler? Officials said nearly every Austrian voted (99.71%) and approved of the union (99.73%).



Cheering crowds greet the Nazis in Vienna



Hitler crosses the border into Austria  
(March 1938)

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Hitler's journey through Austria became a triumphal tour that climaxed in Vienna on March 15, 1938, when around 200,000 cheering German Austrians gathered around the Heldenplatz (Square of Heroes) to hear Hitler say that "The oldest eastern province of the German people shall be, from this point on, the newest bastion of the German Reich."

On April 10, 1938, a referendum was held asking Austrians: Do you agree with the reunification of Austria with the German Reich that was enacted on March 13, 1938, and do you vote for the list of our leader Adolf Hitler? Officials said nearly every Austrian voted (99.71%) and approved of the union (99.73%).

The campaign against the Jews began immediately after the Anschluss. The Nuremberg Laws were adopted in May 1938 and later reinforced with additional anti-Semitic decrees. On Kristallnacht, on November 9-10, synagogues were destroyed, and Jewish shops were plundered and closed. More than 6,000 Jews were arrested overnight, the majority deported to Dachau. Jews were gradually robbed of their freedoms, blocked from almost all professions, shut out of schools and universities, and forced to wear yellow badges. The Nazis dissolved Jewish organizations and institutions, hoping to force Jews to emigrate. Their plans succeeded – by the end of 1941, 130,000 Jews had left Vienna, 30,000 of whom went to the United States. They left behind all their property, but were forced to pay the Reich Flight Tax, a tax on all émigrés from Nazi Germany; some received financial support from international aid organizations so that they could pay this tax. Most of the Jews who had stayed in Vienna eventually became victims of the Holocaust. Of the more than 65,000 Viennese Jews who were deported to concentration camps, fewer than 2,000 survived.



**Immediately after the Anschluss, Vienna's Jews were forced to wash pro-independence slogans from the city's pavements.**

# German Glossary

**Scheiße** (sh-EYE-suh)

English translation: Equilivent to “Shit” or “Damn.” an expletive.

**Guten abend** (goo-ten ah-bent)

English translation: “Good evening.”

**Auf Wiedersehen** (auf Wie-der-seh-en)

English translation: used to express farewell

**Danke Schoen** (dahng-kuh shurn)

English translation: “Thank you very much”

**Wienerschnitzel** (veen-er shnit-səl)

English translation: Viennese cutlet

**Edelweiss** (ay·duhl·vise)

English translation: The plant is also known as the " flower of the Alps " and is a symbol of purity and resilience.

**Katzenjammer** (katz·en·jam·mer)

English translation: 1. hangover. 2 distress. 3. a discordant clamor

**Nein** (nine)

English translation: “No”

**Selchfleisch** (SEL-ch-fly-sh)

English translation: Smoked meats

**Miststück** (mist + shtück)

English translation: Bitch, offensive

**Shtupping** (sh-tup-ing)

English translation: have sex with (someone) (Yiddish word)

**Hitlerjungend** (hit-ler-ju-gend)

English translation: The Hitler Youth

**Anschluss** (anne- shlose)

English translation: 'joining' or 'connection'), also known as the Anschluß Österreichs, Annexation of Austria, was the annexation of the Federal State of Austria into Nazi Germany on 12 March 1938.

**Gestapo** (guh-staa-pow)

English translation: The Gestapo, short for Geheime Staatspolizei (German for Secret State Police), was the official secret police of Nazi Germany and German-occupied Europe.

**Vichyssoise** (vi-shee-swaaz)

English translation: Potato leek soup

**Mein Fuhrer** (mine fyoor-er)

English translation: "My leader" used to refer to Adolf Hitler

**Sachertorte** (sach-er-tor-tay)

English translation: Cake covered with chocolate glaze, with an interior layer of apricot jam either under the glaze or in the middle of two sponge layers.

**Serviette** (ser-vi-ette)

English translation: Napkin

**Spaetzel** (spat-sl)

English translation: European egg pasta

**Reichsmark** (rike·smaark)

English translation: currency of Germany from 1924 until the fall of Nazi Germany in 1945, and in the American, British and French occupied zones of Germany, until 20 June 1948.

**Schweinswurst** (sh-vine verst)

English translation: pork sausage

**Blitzkrieg** (Blitz-Kreeg)

English translation: 'Lightning War', was the method of offensive warfare responsible for Nazi Germany's military successes in the early years of the Second World War.

**Dirndl** (dern-dle)

English translation: feminine dress which originated in German-speaking areas of the Alps

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English translation: feminine dress which originated in German-speaking areas of the Alps

**Tzatzkehleh** (zat-skay)

English translation: Yiddish word that translates to "little toy" or "little darling."

**Krapfen** (krah-fuhn)

English translation: German donut

**Kriegemarine** (kreegz·mr·een)

English translation: the navy of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945

**Topfenstrudel** (top-fen-stroo-dle)

English translation: Strudel, a pastry



**Rottenführer** (rotten-fyoor-er)

English translation: a Nazi Party paramilitary rank that was first created in the year 1932.

**Ländler** (lan-lar)

English translation: a European folk dance in 3/4 time.

**Liebchen** (leeb·chn)

English translation: “sweetheart”

**Dummkopf** (doom-kof)

English translation: a stupid person; a blockhead.

**Dummkopf** (doom-kof)

English translation: a stupid person; a blockhead.

# **In Praise of Baroness Schraeder, the Subversive Bitch from “The Sound of Music”**

**by Sabrina Cooper**

Let’s face it: a cheery, outspoken, child-friendly, music-loving, positive-thinking, curtains-into-clothes-making nun-governess named Maria would steal the heart of anyone. In this case, that’s the Family Von Trapp—a widowed sea captain and his seven children who are based in Salzburg, Austria.

So even before she makes her Sound of Music entrance, Maria’s rival, the Baroness Elsa von Schraeder (played by the enchanting Eleanor Parker), has the odds stacked against her. Still, this villainous vixen arguably upstaged Maria at every turn. It was impossible not to be seduced by her tart snark. Fifty-five years later, it’s safe to say she’s one of the most beguiling bitches who ever graced the silver screen.

What we know about the Baroness before she emerges: she’s noble, she’s rich, the Captain likes to escape to Vienna to visit her, even though there isn’t a clearly defined future between them. The children want to meet her because she has future stepmom potential. Does she live up to the hype? Or will there be a prickly pine cone placed on her seat at the dinner table?

The audience gets their first glimpse of the Baroness when she’s in a convertible with her cohort Max and Captain Von Trapp, and she’s already exuding elegance: a periwinkle scarf wrapped around her head, topped with a pillbox hat to hold down a perfectly coiffed updo (a stark contrast to Maria’s cropped hair). She’s about to meet the Captain’s seven children for the first time, but little does she know she’s already seen them dangling from the trees they drove by earlier. This is after the children roamed about Salzburg all day dressed in nothing but some old drapes (a.k.a. play clothes that Maria miraculously sewed the night before).

Of course the initial introduction between the Baroness, Maria, and the children ends up being a delightful disaster. A canoe Maria and the kids are rowing tips over and everyone gets drenched in Austrian pond water. But the Baroness takes it all in stride and hides her giggles. She purrs out an old-school “How do you do?” while smoking with a cigarette holder. Meanwhile, her whole look screams fantastisch: a skirt suit with a polka dot blouse and some classic pearls. This fierce Frau means business.

Perhaps she should have also been wondering “How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?” with the nuns in an earlier scene, because Maria has unwittingly charmed the Captain during her short time as governess. In spite of the Baroness’s best efforts to remind him he has a luxe, quick-witted, decadent diva who’d jump at the chance to be his life partner, the Captain continues inching toward his children’s nanny, known endearingly as “a flibbertigibbet” or “a clown” back at the Abbey. The Baroness’s attempts to dazzle the Captain with a fancy party backfire—who invited that Nazi Herr Zeller?—despite her glimmering ball gown and dainty tiara; she’s noble, after all, and demands to be treated like royalty.

As the Captain's love for Maria becomes heartbreakingly apparent, the Baroness takes the classy route: Like any self-respecting woman, she makes a clean break, destined for a better love life in Vienna. "Fond as I am of you... I really don't think you're the right man for me," she tells the Captain. "You're much too independent. And I need someone who needs me desperately... or at least needs my money desperately."

After the Baroness says her teary-eyed version of "So Long, Farewell" to the Captain, the audience is deprived of her well-timed zingers ("Why didn't you tell me to bring along my harmonica?") and her passive-aggressive spite: "My dear, is there anything you can't do?" she asks Maria, to which the latter replies, "Well, I'm not sure I'll make a very good nun." Never skipping a beat, the Baroness presses on: "If you have any problems, I'll be happy to help." Despite being a principal cast member who never actually sings or contributes musically to a feature called, well, *The Sound of Music*, the Baroness remains pitch-perfect after fifty-five years. Bitch-perfect, if you will.

