

Article

Making Friends, Making Families: Post-World War II Marriages between Austrian Women and British Soldiers, 1945–1955

Lukas Schretter

Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on Consequences of War, 8010 Graz, Austria;
lukas.schretter@bik.lbg.ac.at

Abstract: Between 1945 and 1955, Austria, like Germany, was divided into four zones under the control of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Britain, and France. This article discusses marriages between British “occupiers” and Austrian “occupied” between 1945 and 1955, examining the policies for contact from the enactment of the non-fraternisation order until the lifting of the marriage ban. It shows how marriages were concluded despite bureaucratic and legal obstacles and discusses the experiences of Austrian “war brides” upon their arrival and settlement in Britain. The analysis draws upon a wide range of documents to survey the response of the British government and military authorities to British–Austrian relationships and marriage applications. Case studies of an Austrian war bride and children of married British–Austrian couples represent the links between state and military intervention and individual experiences set off by the presence of Allied soldiers in Austria during the first decade after the end of World War II.

Keywords: marriage; World War II; British–Austrian relations; social policy; occupation



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1. Introduction

After the end of World War II in Europe, Erna B., born in Vienna in 1927, was employed as kitchen help at the headquarters of the British troops at Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna. After a few weeks, she changed jobs and worked as a live-in babysitter for the family of a British brigadier. There, she met the British soldier Bernhard B., whom she married in early 1947. After his discharge from military service, Bernhard B. returned to England, his pregnant wife following him after she had received her immigration permit. Erna B. reports about the first months in England: “I was still wearing a *Tracht*. And gradually, gradually I stopped wearing the Austrian stuff. Because people would stare at me. I did not like that. But my husband loved it”.¹ She remembers feeling homesick for Vienna, which she tried to alleviate by wearing the traditional costume and cooking Austrian food. Later, she decided to give up wearing the traditional Austrian costume, on the one hand to avoid the curious or disapproving looks of others, and on the other hand to reassure those around her, and herself, that she, in fact, had “arrived” in Britain.

Erna B. is one of thousands of—young—Austrian and German women who settled temporarily or permanently in Britain after World War II. Many of them had responded to a call from the British government, which was trying to boost the economy with the help of foreign labour (Lewis 2013; Schroppe 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2014; Steinert 1996). More generally, as post-war Britain witnessed labour shortages, which were particularly noticeable in traditionally female areas, such as textiles, nursing, and institutional domestic service, the British government turned towards in-migration as a solution. It recruited *white*² foreign laborers—i.e., from the Displaced Persons camps in Europe—so-called European Volunteer Workers, who came as both refugees and economic migrants, and migrant labour, which was usually from the West Indies, India, and Pakistan (Wills 2017). Austrian women like Erna B., however, were not drawn to Britain because of economic reasons but because they had met British soldiers, whom they followed as wives and dependants after their

discharge from military service and subsequent return home. Between 1945 and 1955, Austria, like Germany, was divided into four zones under the control of the Soviet Union, the United States of America (U.S.A.), Britain, and France; voluntary relationships between the “occupiers” and “occupied” included love affairs, friendships, and brief affairs, as well as sex work and “supply partnerships”, while at the other end of the spectrum of personal and intimate relationships, there was sexual violence against local women by Allied soldiers—occurring in all zones (Gebhardt 2016; Grossmann 1995; Lilly 2007). In the British-, U.S. American-, and French-administered territories, but not in the Soviet-administered territory, longer-term consensual partnerships also led to marriages.

Marriages between British soldiers or British civilian administrators working in British-occupied Austria and Austrian women were not part of the collective memory of the post-war period. While extensive research exists on the history of German women and the role of marital status during and after World War II (Heineman 1999), and marriages between G.I.s and foreign nationals in the 20th century (Zeiger 2010), there is less research on marriages of British soldiers abroad. An insightful article on marriages between British soldiers and German women after World War II was published by Christopher Knowles (2019). Information about the living conditions of German women who had married British soldiers is also provided by the results of a research project by Steinert and Weber-Newth (2000, 2006), which included their contribution to the exhibition “It Started With a Kiss. German-Allied Relations After 1945”, shown at the AlliiertenMuseum in Berlin between 2005–2006, and chapters of the catalogue for the exhibition “From Foe to Friend”, which will be available to be seen at the National Army Museum in London from 2020 until 2024 (Johnston 2019). Of great value are also the PhD thesis by Isabel Schopper (2010a) and the publications resulting from it (Schopper 2010b, 2011, 2014) that are based on interviews with Austrian female migrants to Britain, including 18 interviews with “war brides” of British servicemen. Apart from studies on the relations of U.S. American, French, and Soviet troops with the Austrian and German populations, the less numerous studies on British–Austrian relations (Brunnhöfer 2002, 2008; Nezmahen 2013; Schmidlechner 1997, pp. 65–68; 2015; Schneider 1993, pp. 134–43) and British–German relations (Knowles 2017; Satjukow 2015; Smith 2009) are also relevant for the following article.

The following article attempts to add to the state of research by discussing, first, the policies for contact between British servicemen and Austrian women from the enactment of the non-fraternisation order until its relaxation in July 1945 and lifting in September 1945. Second, the article follows the development to the lifting of the marriage ban in the summer of 1946. Third, the article shows how marriages were concluded despite the obstacles that continued to exist after 1946. Fourth, drawing on the experiences of Erna B. and other case studies, the article establishes Austrian “war brides” as the main subjects of analysis. It traces their journey from their first encounters with British soldiers to their marriages and, finally, to their arrival and settlement in Britain, their efforts to overcome the initial difficulties of living in a foreign country, and their issues of citizenship. The scope of this paper is limited to the discussion of heterosexual marriages between *white* British men and Austrian women, setting aside questions of out-of-wedlock relationships, same-sex relationships, and “race”. Fifth, the article concludes with children of British–Austrian marriages after World War II. The paragraphs on the biographies of Stefanie S., Marianne Faithfull, and Wolfgang H. may be a starting point for further research on the childhood experiences, identity development, and life stories of children of married British–Austrian couples.

2. Research Methodology

This paper is based on research conducted as part of a dissertation project between 2015 and 2018 at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on Consequences of War. It draws on a range of materials, such as British Foreign Office documents held at the National Archives, House of Commons minutes, newspaper reports, and unpublished accounts by members of the British Army held at the Imperial War Museum in London. Referring

to existing research, the article shows the extent to which the British authorities treated relationships and marriages between soldiers and local women in Austria and Germany differently. For comparison, the article also addresses how fraternisation of Allied soldiers with local women and marriage applications were treated in the U.S. American, Soviet, and French occupation zones in Austria. Two oral history interviews with Erna B., which explore individual agency during the immigration and settlement process, and interviews with children of British–Austrian couples were conducted in Britain and Austria between 2016 and 2018. Access to interview partners was gained through referral of Austrian–British photographer, Marion Trestler, who had published the results of a documentation and photography project with 26 Austrian female migrants to England—some of them “war brides” (Trestler 2013)—and through word of mouth. For reasons of research ethics, only those potential interview partners who had agreed to be contacted by the author or who approached the author on their own initiative were interviewed. All the interviewees’ names used in this paper have been changed to protect their anonymity.

3. Non-Fraternisation: Policy and Reality

After the end of World War II in Europe, in fourfold-occupied Austria and Germany, Allied soldiers and locals were not supposed to mingle, and the political framework determined the course of relationships between Allied soldiers and local women. Private relations of U.S. American and British army personnel with the Austrian and German civilian population of any kind, including sexual contact and love affairs, were forbidden. The fraternisation ban, inaugurated in September 1944 when the first troops entered Germany, was intended to shield servicemen from locals, but it was not meant to give servicemen *carte blanche* to be rough or display undignified or aggressive conduct toward the local population.³ The strict regulations of the British and the U.S. American (Bauer 1998b; Goedde 1999, 2003) military government differed from those of the French military command, which did not perceive fraternisation as a threat to the occupation effort and rejected isolation of the troops as “antithetical to the French character” (Eisterer 1993; Glöckner 2018; Huber 1997; Hudemann 2006). Like the French, the Soviet military government also did not impose an official fraternisation ban on its soldiers. Sexual intercourse between army personnel and non-Soviet women was frowned upon, but the Soviet administration tolerated low-key love affairs between soldiers and local women. At the same time, guilty verdicts were handed down for female spies who allegedly used “pillow talk” with Soviet soldiers on behalf of Western intelligence services to gain secret information or to persuade Soviet army members to desert (Satjukow 2008; Stelzl-Marx 2012).

The “problem” of fraternisation was not only addressed in various ways in the individual occupation zones. The Allied powers also distinguished between the Austrian and the German civilian population. Austria was considered the first victim of Nazi Germany based on the Moscow Declaration of 1943. Consequently, the non-fraternisation order stated that it was “the policy of the Allies under the terms of the MOSCOW Declaration that in general the attitude towards the Austrian population should be firm and just, but less severe than in GERMANY”.⁴ Despite what was later called the victim theory (“*Opferthese*”), which had already found expression in the wording for Austria’s Declaration of Independence of 27 April 1945, and for decades served as an argument for denying Austrian complicity in Nazi crimes, Austria was not absolved of all responsibility. Instead, the military authorities pursued the intention of eliminating Nazi ideology as well as being supportive in the establishment of a free and independent Austria (Ibid.).

The fraternisation ban was in force in Austria only for the short period between May–September 1945. Already in mid-July 1945, the relaxation of the ban had been announced. From then on, contact between army personnel and locals could be made more easily. For example, British officers were allowed to take advantage of the hospitality of Austrians—unless it was a private party—but not of Germans.⁵

Two factors may have been decisive in why the civilian population was treated differently in Austria than in Germany. First, military authorities had already planned before the end of the war that guidelines in Austria would not be enforced as strictly as in Germany, nor would they be maintained longer than necessary.⁶ A manual published jointly with the U.S. American military in 1944, entitled “Austria. A Soldier’s Guide” (in distinction to the “Instructions for British Servicemen in Germany 1944”), had emphasised that the Austrian population spoke the German language but could not be compared with the German population. With all due caution, it was important for the soldiers to bear in mind that Austria had not been as hostile to the Allies during the war years as Germany had been (Rohrbach and Wahl 2017). Weeks after the end of the war, it was stated that their “good behaviour” justified restriction-free relations with the Austrians henceforth.⁷ Second, British military officials cited strategic considerations. On 2 July 1945, General Richard McCreery, later the British representative on the Allied Commission for Austria, in consultation with General Mark Clark, U.S. American High Commissioner for Austria, suggested to Field Marshal Alexander Wilkinson, first head of the military government of the Austrian province of Styria, that the fraternisation ban be relaxed until the British takeover of those areas in Styria that had previously been administered by Soviet troops. The British troops were not to be perceived by the civilian population as more rigorous than the Soviet troops, who had never officially banned fraternisation.⁸ Within the “patronised nation” (Bischof and Leidenfrost 1988), as Austria has been referred to in the early phase of the Second Republic, the Allied zones were politically isolated from each other; although the British control of the Austrian population in the first post-war weeks and months was strict and comprehensive, occupation files testify to the extent to which the British were concerned about their image as a “fair” occupation power among the Austrian population (Beer 2015).

Moreover, the relaxation of the fraternisation ban in the summer of 1945 is attributed to the individual needs and wishes of the soldiers stationed in Austria. As is also the case for Germany, diaries and reports by members of the British Army preserved in the Imperial War Museum in London testify that the ban on fraternisation in Austria proved unenforceable. For example, former Captain Kenneth Oglethorpe reports on the widespread contact between British troops and the civilian population: “We were now an Army of Occupation and the Austrians were very friendly and co-operative. At first we were not allowed to fraternize with them, but after a short time this restriction was relaxed and it soon became apparent that friendships between conquerors and conquered had already been formed and from then on there were to be many more”.⁹ A British soldier stationed in the province of Carinthia noted in his diary on 11 May 1945 already, “Met English speaking girl, first ‘fratting’”.¹⁰ Another member of the British Army, Captain Barry Custance Baker, wrote in his memoirs about British–Austrian dances at the British headquarters at Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna: “It was definitely two worlds, us and them, but the barriers were gradually being eroded”,¹¹ and British staff officer Lavina Orde sums up the moral of the days as follows: “Friends became enemies, former enemies friends”.¹² Reading the accounts of former British soldiers, the gendered term “fraternisation” seems to be somewhat a misnomer, as it clearly had a heterosexual connotation and referred almost exclusively to relationships of soldiers with local women. In this inherently gendered experience of occupation, simplistic and sweeping explanations of the attraction between Allied soldiers and the civilian population do not do full justice to individual feelings and interests.¹³ For some women, the generally positive attitude toward the “Tommies”, as the British soldiers were referred to, the charisma of the “war winners”, or material needs may have been decisive factors in their starting relationships with British soldiers, while the latter may have tried to make up for the “lost” years, also in romantic terms, during their stationing phase.

Relationships between British soldiers and Austrian women that had already been formed shortly after the end of the war no longer had to be kept secret after the ban was relaxed in July 1945. In September 1945, the British authorities lifted restrictions on contacts between troop members and the local civilian population.¹⁴

Yet, neither diplomatic rapprochement nor the personal relations developed in a strictly linear course. In the immediate post-war period in particular, policymakers remained anxious about the legacy of the Nazi regime and did not meaningfully distinguish between Nazi perpetrators and the people at large. While regulations concerning fraternisation were henceforth left to the discretion of the local commanders, “commonsense [sic!] dictates that the extension of fraternization must be gradual in development”. (Ibid.) In addition to the infiltration of British troops by former Nazis, the British feared the spread of venereal diseases, which was considered to pose a threat, especially in the areas previously occupied by Soviet troops.¹⁵ In the “Soldier’s Guide”, first published before the end of World War II, representations of Austria in gendered terms included the warning that “numbers of women will be tempted to make themselves cheap for what they can get out of you. Many of them, whether amateurs or professions will be infected. So be on your guard”. (Rohrbach and Wahl 2017). After the war, a rigid system of control and surveillance was intended to prevent the containment of sex work and thus the spread of venereal diseases, especially among soldiers (Stieber 2005, p. 332). In addition, adultery by married British soldiers was to be prevented, and there were demographic considerations. Due to relationships between British soldiers and Austrian women, fewer unmarried British men might be available for young British women. In lifting the fraternisation ban, “[c]onsideration must be given not only to the local conditions here, but also to the mixed feelings held by many wives and families at home, where certain aspects of fraternization may have been somewhat exaggerated and distorted”.¹⁶ At the same time, relationships between British women and Austrian men, who were also part of the post-war period in smaller numbers, remained invisible.¹⁷ After the fraternisation ban was lifted, these relationships may have been sanctioned more strongly by the British military leadership than relationships between British soldiers and Austrian women. For the British zone in Germany, Daniel Cowling notes, “while British women seldom engaged in such Anglo-German affairs, impeded not only by official structures but also the threat of moral censure, many of them did partake in amorous interactions with other members of the Allied occupation authorities” (Cowling 2018, p. 215).

It was not only on the part of the British military authorities that there were reservations about their soldiers fraternising with women from the occupation zones. In both Austria and Germany, women who maintained relationships with Allied soldiers were sometimes the target of hostility and even physical assault. They ran the risk of being criticised across the board and being called “prostitutes”, “chocolate girls”, “Franzosenhuren”, “Russenflitscherl”, and “Amifrüchtchen” (Biddiscombe 2004; John 1996). Maria S., a so-called occupation child born of a liaison between an Allied soldier and an Austrian woman, also reports that her mother met with rejection: “After the war, it was not easy for any mother to raise children. And then by an occupying soldier! It was whispered about behind her back, I was told, when I was already older”.¹⁸ Above all, Austrian women who performed sex work for Allied soldiers were condemned. Even psychology and psychiatry in post-war Austria dealt with *Soldatenbräuten* “whom acquaintance with soldiers of foreign occupying powers has led down the path of prostitution and who have not understood how to find their way back to normal social order”. (Hoff and Ringel 1952, p. 140, translation by the author) Using the example of the “G.I. Bride”, Ingrid Bauer analyzes how relationships of any kind between Austrian women and Allied soldiers were considered as crossing the line, and how the women were in danger of being discriminated against. This was based on an image of women that associated female sexuality with shamelessness and obscenity. Former *Wehrmacht* soldiers interpreted relationships between Austrian women and Allied soldiers as a loss of “hereditary property rights to ‘their women’” (Bauer 1998a, p. 47), and these relationships threatened “to relativize the immunizing effects of that ‘morass of

Austrian phraseology' in which participating in the Nazi's aggressive warfare had been mystified as a manly deed, as the defence of the homeland and of women and children. The threatened collapse of this rationalization for an individual's own wartime military service inexorably confronted that man with the true dimensions of that action, with the horrors of World War II, and this with the 'question of meaning' as well". (Bauer 1998a, p. 48). The refrain of the day was that so-called occupation brides were about to "drag Austria's good name into the dirt". (Bauer 1998a, p. 44). Contacts of *Wehrmacht* soldiers with women in the territories occupied by the "German Reich" during World War II, on the other hand, were never discussed in this context. Thus, according to Bauer, while relationships between Austrian women and Allied soldiers were seen as a threat to Austria's honour, "a similar nexus of proper sexual national behaviour applied to Man and Nation does not exist" (Bauer 1998a, p. 44).

4. The Marriage Ban: "A Hangover from War Conditions"

After the lifting of the British fraternisation ban in September 1945, the number of marriage applications from British soldiers and Austrian women increased. However, military superiors still had to deny such requests.

British and U.S. American non-fraternisation and marriage policy operated largely in parallel. For example, before the end of the war, the British and U.S. American military authorities communicated regarding intermarriage as an extreme form of fraternisation, "which entails numerous undesirable legal consequences on the nationality of the parties concerned and the issue of the marriage as well as upon property rights".¹⁹ As can be drawn from a correspondence between the respective legal departments, those responsible suggested that such marriages should be prevented from the outset, fearing undesirable consequences of a mere prohibition of such marriages, which could only be enforced by disciplinary measures, thereby referring to a possible loss of the soldiers' morale if soldiers saw their freedom restricted in these "private" matters (Ibid.).

Whereas, until the end of 1945, British soldiers were subject to regulations like those for U.S. soldiers, the War Brides Act of January 1946 was a turning point. Then, women who were not from the U.S.A. still did not automatically become U.S. citizens by marriage, but they were no longer hindered by national immigration quotas. Six months later, the Fiancées Act offered another opportunity for residency in the U.S.A., provided marriage took place within three months. With the Hart–Celler Act (Immigration and Nationality Act) in 1965, the system of national immigration quotas ended (Zeiger 2010, pp. 127–62). In the case of Black G.I.s, however, the necessary marriage license to marry their *white* Austrian girlfriends was only granted in rare cases by the military authorities. The rationale, if one was required, was that almost two-thirds of the then forty-eight U.S. states had anti-miscegenation laws forbidding the marriage of Blacks and *whites* (Bauer 2021). French soldiers were also allowed, at least officially, to marry Austrian and German women from January 1946. In practice, the military authorities refused such requests. It was not until February 1947 that members of the military government no longer had to resign from their service in the event of a marriage to a civilian. However, they still required a permit. For ordinary soldiers, this regulation applied from August 1948, but after the wedding, they were transferred to another country. Unlike in the British and U.S. American zones, the attitude of the French authorities did not change until the 1950s. "Our wedding day! The road leading up to that date was a long one [. . .]", reports Robert Viala (2006), a former French soldier in Germany. Relationships that found themselves "caught in the web of military regulations" (Picaper 2006) sometimes resulted in happy marriages, but preparations often took a complex and disappointing course due to bureaucratic obstacles (Hudemann 2006, p. 34; Satjukow and Gries 2015, p. 114f). For Soviet army personnel, with exceptions, there was no possibility of marriage to Austrian or German civilians in the post-war period. The announcement of a pregnancy or a desire to marry in most cases led to the end of the relationship. Although Austrian–Soviet marriages had been permitted de jure since 1953, they remained the exception (Stelzl-Marx 2005, p. 423). Even in the German

Democratic Republic, where German–Soviet marriages had also been officially permitted since 1953, couples wishing to marry encountered obstacles for decades (Satjukow 2008, pp. 285–91).

For the British zone in Austria, the marriage ban applied to British servicemen but not to former prisoners of war from the British Army “who were befriended by Austrian families whilst they were prisoners of war and sometimes aided in escaping, and who, in consequence, became engaged to Austrian women before their liberation”.²⁰ Often, these couples had married immediately after the war, and they had to apply for a second marriage to have the first one legally confirmed.²¹ “[I]n view of the generally more lenient policy towards Austria”,²² the British commander-in-chief in Austria had the authority to approve marriage applications. Furthermore, in January 1946, British Army personnel were given permission to marry Austrians if the marriage had been arranged before March 1945 and both bride and groom served in the British Army or the woman was a member of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (Storey and Housego 2011, pp. 39–47), the female branch of the British Army (Schropper 2010a, p. 62).

The marriage ban continued to be unquestioned until spring 1946. In autumn 1945, Martin Lindsay MP had explicitly warned against lifting the ban in Germany in the British Parliament, especially if the government decided to do so without prior discussion.²³ Moreover, the legal basis of the marriage ban led to discussions. There was concern that the ban might be invalid due to procedural errors.²⁴ According to David Rees-Williams MP, a separate law would have to be passed to restrict the marriage rights of soldiers. His concern was not to be understood as a petition for the abolition of the marriage ban. On the contrary, he was concerned with enshrining it in law. “What I am trying to do today is to ensure that the present government does not adopt the bad practice of its predecessors”,²⁵ said Rees-Williams, referring to the fact that in summer 1945, a Labour government had been sworn in.

Irrespective of the question of the legal validity of the marriage ban, just weeks later, debates in the British Parliament focused on whether the marriage ban, if enforceable in practice, should be lifted for humanitarian reasons. For the time being, the marriage ban was upheld, even when critical MPs perceived it as exerting too much influence on soldiers’ private lives. In April 1946, Richard Stokes MP pointed out the negative consequences that the marriage ban would have for the men. However, it is not documented in the sources reviewed whether Stokes commented on the *nature* of these consequences, such as the birth of illegitimate children.²⁶ In the same discussion, Arthur Symonds MP asked the Minister of War, Jack Lawson, whether there were plans to lift the marriage ban in Austria, since Austria, unlike Germany, was considered a “liberated” country. The ban on British soldiers marrying in Austria was still under consideration, Frederick Bellenger, Financial Secretary to the Minister of War and later Lawson’s successor, replied.²⁷ Even before the end of the war, consideration had been given within the military to lifting the marriage ban in Austria earlier than in Germany.²⁸

As with the relaxation and lifting of the fraternisation ban, British policy distinguished between the Austrian and German populations. In the speech of Benn Levy MP on 15 April 1946, it was to be clarified whether the marriage ban would still be valid in Austria.²⁹ In any case, in Levy’s opinion, the ban represented a gross and inadmissible restriction of personal freedom in a private matter. As a convinced opponent of the marriage ban in the occupied territories, he understood it as a “hangover from wartime conditions”. Levy presented arguments in favour of a marriage ban, only to refute or at least invalidate them immediately afterwards. The first argument was that marriages between British men and foreign women put British unmarried women at a disadvantage because it deprived them of potential British husbands. This argument, Levy stated, did not consider the fact that the number of marriageable British women has been reduced as well: “It is a question of complementary arithmetic, and what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander”. He thereby referred to the relationships of British women, who were believed

to belong to the nation's men, with men of both enemy and allied nationalities. "Sexual patriotism" (Webster 2018, p. 199) was demanded by popular opinion and the British government, expressing uneasiness or hostility about British women's sexual encounters with all men who were not native-born Britons, e.g., fraternisation with *white* and *non-white* G.I.s stationed in Britain from January 1942 (Lee 2011; Bland 2017a, 2017b; Savage 2020, more generally, Reynolds 2000) and fraternisation with German and Italian prisoners of war (Moore 2013).

Levy's second argument was that the marriage ban served to protect the soldiers from themselves. After years of exclusively male companionship, they would not be able to distinguish coolly between a "good girl" and a "bad one, the good wife and the bad wife". According to Levy, this argument could be countered by the fact that men make mistakes in choosing their spouses even in peacetime. "Cold judgement is not usually a decisive factor in these matters, and I question whether it should be". The third argument was that German women would use marriages with British soldiers to better themselves and "to escape the miserable and desolate plight to which German Fascism has reduced the German people, such is the hunger, such the insecurity, such the poverty and such the despair". Consequently, "to many a German girl, marriage with a Britisher must seem like a lifebelt in the midst of her miseries". Levy did not contradict the argument that "German girls will be eager to make marriages of convenience, not the first in history nor yet the hardest to excuse", but suggested that instead of a marriage ban, soldiers should be advised about relationships with civilians in the Allied zones. He argued that advice was preferable to prohibition.³⁰

Lifting the marriage ban was considered urgent, as Levy already knew of several soldiers who intended to marry their fiancées and girlfriends in the British zone (Ibid.). The following day, the case of a British soldier who insisted on permission to marry a German woman so that their child would be born in marriage was brought up in Parliament.³¹ Some British soldiers also tried to circumvent the marriage ban and smuggle their partners into Britain. Mention was made, for example, of Regular Army Colonel Wood, who secretly flew to Britain with his girlfriend in order to marry her there.³² Following the example of G.I.s in Germany (Shukert and Smith Scibetta 1988, p. 141f), one legal way to marry an Austrian or German was to leave the military and work as a civilian employee for the British armed forces, thus circumventing the marriage ban for soldiers (Schropper 2010a, pp. 62, 69). Similarly, an Austrian or German woman was able to obtain permission, subject to various conditions, to travel to Britain to marry the British man who had been demobilised from the armed forces and had returned home. As the groom then was a civilian, he was not subject to the same regulations as serving soldiers.

Just as Levy had advocated for the lifting of the marriage ban, there were clear signs in the spring and early summer of 1946 that the ban would soon no longer be in force in Austria, not least as "the C.-in C. British Troops in Austria has represented that the ban imposed on British soldiers under his command on marriage with Austrian women should be lifted at an early date, on the grounds that the rule applied to Austrian women when compared with the position obtaining in regard to the Italian, is a cause of dissatisfaction, whereas most men consider the Austrian girl as better suited to be the wife of an Englishman than some or most Italians".³³

On 4 June 1946, the question was raised in Parliament whether the ban on marriage in the British zone of Austria was still valid, as the case of an Austrian woman who had entered England to marry a British Army member had already been made public.³⁴ In the same debate, Reginald Sorensen MP urged to finally decide on lifting the marriage ban in Austria.³⁵ On 18 July 1946, George Muff MP demanded special treatment for Austria as far as the marriage ban was concerned. He reported that, during a stay in Austria, soldiers had personally asked him for advice on the legal way they were allowed to marry local women. Officers and military chaplains were already confronted with 2000 requests from soldiers wanting to marry.³⁶ On 23 July 1946, Secretary of State, Jack Lawson, pointed out that soldiers would face disciplinary consequences for "illegal" marriages.³⁷ A few days later,

on 30 July 1946, Tom Driberg MP received a positive answer from the Secretary of State for War on the question of whether a decision on the possibility of marriages of British soldiers to German and Austrian women could be expected after the summer recess of Parliament.³⁸ The discussion of the issue in the British Parliament received media attention in Austria.³⁹ In addition, the questions from MPs likely increased the pressure on the government and military leadership to quickly find a solution for soldiers and their fiancées, some of whom were pregnant or had already given birth to “occupation children”.

In the summer of 1946, the ban on marriage in the British zones of Austria and Germany was finally lifted, considering that marriage contracted without permission was still valid and the women thereby automatically received British citizenship. The recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in Austria to lift the marriage ban, as it was not compatible with the recently decided relaxation of the ban on marrying Italian women, was also taken into account. The cabinet initially proposed to retain the marriage ban for all nationalities except Germans and Japanese women, but then decided that the ban should be lifted for German and Austrian women simultaneously. The ban on marrying women from Japan, where Britain had deployed tens of thousands of troops for months until the final surrender on 15 August 1945, was retained (Knowles 2019, p. 229). In a meeting held on 25 July 1946, the Cabinet agreed that “local military commanders should be authorised to relax the present ban on marriages between British Servicemen and foreign women, other than Japanese, in cases where the reasons for marriage were good and there was no security objection”.⁴⁰ While the existing marriage ban did not appear to protect British servicemen from imprudent marriages, the “transfer of families of British Servicemen to Germany should make the situation easier”. (Ibid.) Harry Nathan, Secretary of State in the War Ministry, announced the removal of restrictions on marriages with German and Austrian women and with women of other ex-enemy countries, other than Japan.⁴¹ The lifting of the marriage ban was likely met with general approval, but not without reservations, as a newspaper article from July 1946 indicates, since relationships between British women and German prisoners of war in Britain were not allowed to lead to marriages⁴²—the restrictions on marriage between German men and British women were not lifted until July 1947, when the Secretary of State declared that prisoners would be allowed normal interpersonal relations with civilians. Even then, however, they were not allowed to stay with their spouses, but continued to be housed in camps and hostels (Moore 2013, p. 757). For example, on 27 November 1946, an Austrian newspaper reported on the marriage between a British military officer and an Austrian woman.⁴³

5. From Enemy to Family: British–Austrian Wedding Preparations

From the point of view of the British military leadership, marriages between British soldiers and local women in Austria and Germany posed a problem even after the marriage ban was lifted. It was not only questions of morality but also of security that had to be considered: In the approval procedures, protection and security requirements of the military, the state, society, and the applicant were intertwined. British–Austrian couples, just like British–German (Knowles 2017, p. 170; 2019, p. 231; Rusher 2006) and Austrian–U.S. American couples (Pelz 1996, p. 392f), had to overcome bureaucratic and legal obstacles and show perseverance before they were allowed to marry. A British soldier had to obtain permission from his superior to marry an Austrian or German. If the religious affiliation of the spouses differed, the chaplains of the respective denominations were to be informed by the soldier’s superiors. “Marriage with a person belonging to a different country, particularly by young soldiers, is open to obvious risks of future unhappiness”, and to protect them “from impetuosity, and improvidence”, army chaplains and superiors were generally to advise applicants against marriage.⁴⁴ At the same time, army chaplains and the applicants’ superiors had to disregard personal convictions and had to be reminded that the acceptance of an application for marriage should not be refused without reason or the processing of the application unnecessarily delayed.⁴⁵

Even after the marriage ban was lifted, intermarriages were strongly discouraged. Benn Levy MP had already warned that soldiers would be withdrawn from their stationing places and thus prevented from marrying.⁴⁶ Former British Army soldier James Lucas reported that he had only received permission to marry an Austrian after threatening to inform the British Royal Family about the British military's handling of soldiers' marriage applications. Lucas sees the reasons for the delays in processing his application in the conjecture that the soldiers would break off their engagements: "The army authorities were hoping we applicants would lose interest in the girl we intended to marry and would withdraw the application". Moreover, the army was surprised that "so many soldiers applied to wed local girls. It was not so much a stream of applications that the authorities received as a flood. Being charitable to the Army that flood may have overwhelmed the staff allocated to deal with marriage applications and may have been the reason why I heard nothing for such a long time" (Lucas 1995, p. 597). Delays in processing soldiers' marriage applications were not only orchestrated in the British zone, but also, for example, in the U.S. American zone, to dissuade them from their intention to marry (Wahl et al. 2016, p. 21).

Intermarriages were only permitted under certain conditions, and the requirements that Austrian as well as German couples had to fulfil were as follows: The road to marriage included a six-month period from application to marriage. The soldiers were to use this period to return to Britain.⁴⁷ Lieutenant General James Steele explained this policy by saying that soldiers should have enough time for further reflection and should discuss the intended marriage with their parents: "I have mixed feelings about British army personnel marrying here. We have a lot of very young soldiers here now and I don't want them rushing into marriages with Austrian girls".⁴⁸ Exceptions to this rule were to be granted only if the couples wishing to marry had known each other for some time, if delaying the marriage would cause undue hardship to the bride and groom, or if the groom was to be discharged from military service before the deadline and postponing the discharge would not be in the interest of the military.⁴⁹ While a soldier had to reflect upon his intention to marry an Austrian during the six-month waiting period, the British intelligence service examined and evaluated his future wife. Under no circumstances were women who had been close to the Nazi regime to marry British men and thus "shelter under the protection of British citizenship".⁵⁰ For example, Gabriele B. applied for permission to travel to Britain to marry, but the following was against her: "Member of NSV from summer 1940–Apr 1945, Member of ANST from May 1938–Apr 1940, Member of NSLB from May 1940–Apr 1945 Jungmädelschaft führerin and gruppen führerin [sic!] from Sep 41 to Jul 42".⁵¹ The future wives of British men were to be interviewed according to the specifications of a questionnaire in which private details were divulged. In addition to certifying their political character, they had to submit a certificate of good conduct, for which they often turned to the mayors of their hometowns.⁵² In January 1947, the British military authorities requested the Austrian Ministry of the Interior "to instruct the Austrian registrars that if a British officer or soldier makes application to them for marriage to an Austrian subject they should first ask whether the officer or soldier concerned has written authority from HQ BTA, and that if this authority is not produced they should report the case forthwith to HQ BTA".⁵³ Despite these requirements, the regulations and checks were conducted inconsistently, or at least there was some flexibility in how the requirements were interpreted. Erna B. reports from her own experience that she was not subjected to any checks, as she was known to the British military authorities due to her professional activity first at the British headquarters at Schönbrunn Palace, and then as a live-in babysitter in the family of a British officer.⁵⁴ James Lucas's fiancée did not have to appear in person either: "In my case that was not required as my bride-to-be worked in 5 CCG and was known to the officers" (Lucas 1995, p. 597). Part of the lengthy approval process, which may have been considered embarrassing, included medical examinations (Schropper 2010a, pp. 65–70).

In the early days, the British authorities intended to admit and process marriage applications from British soldiers in Austria only within the short period from autumn 1946 to June 1947. The six-month deadline for reviewing marriage applications was to be met by a cut-off date in June 1947.⁵⁵ However, this proposal was met with rejection from within the military. Since it could be assumed that British soldiers would not adhere to this deadline regardless of the threat of punishment, and that this would not contribute to maintaining soldierly discipline, the proposal was not implemented.⁵⁶

As soon as British–Austrian couples were granted permission to marry, not all obstacles had been overcome. There were also requirements to be met when planning the wedding. British–Austrian brides and grooms had to take both British and Austrian legislation into account. The Foreign Marriage Act of 1892 stipulated that in Britain, marriages of military personnel would only be valid if they were performed by British military chaplains or high-ranking army personnel. Marriages were also possible if the British were not soldiers but civilian employees of the Allied administration.⁵⁷ At the same time, since marriages conducted in a British military office were not considered valid by the Austrian side, according to the Austrian Ministry of Justice, the wedding couple were advised to additionally have their marriages confirmed in Austrian registry offices. Only then did a marriage have legal effect both in Britain and in Austria. Church marriages before an Austrian chaplain were invalid in both countries if they were not confirmed by civil marriage ceremonies.⁵⁸

In the first months after the lifting of the marriage ban, many British and Austrian women wedded initially only in British authorities, and not in Austrian registry offices. In the summer of 1947, the Austrian side retroactively recognised all British–Austrian marriages that had only complied with British regulations, provided they had taken place before 20 July 1947.⁵⁹ In the preceding weeks, a large number of post-nuptials had taken place in Austrian registry offices: In July 1947, the newspaper, *Neue Zeit*, reported that at the registry office in Graz, “[e]ven for some time [. . .] marriages between Austrians and members of the occupying power [had] played a major role. Following the news that marriages before the Allied authorities are now officially recognised by the Austrian authorities, the number of civil marriages of Austrian girls to Allied soldiers has decreased. Mostly such marriages are now only performed before British army chaplains”.⁶⁰ After 20 July 1947, marriages were only valid if they were also performed in an Austrian registry office.⁶¹ In Austria, couples were informed of this change in the law through the media. The motive for the “retroactive validity” of these already concluded marriages was said to be “the protection of the interests of these Austrian women and the children resulting from these marriages”.⁶² Not only the desire of the couples to marry, but also the legal status of their children, and possibly also the “problem” of “occupation children” born out of wedlock, for whom the British soldiers could not be obliged to make any alimony payments (Schretter 2021; Thane and Evans 2012, pp. 114–17), may have been taken into account.

In addition to the formal requirements for marriage, the wedding couple also had to prepare for the wedding ceremony. According to the caption of a wedding photograph preserved in the Imperial War Museum, the first British–Austrian wedding would have taken place as early as 3 June 1946, before the marriage ban was lifted.⁶³ James Lucas reports that during his wedding preparations, he relied on support from British troops: “The wedding dress was made, a cake produced by an Austrian chef working for the NAAFI and wine purchased from Italy”. The wedding preparations in Graz, the capital of the Austrian province of Styria, may have been elaborate: “The bridal bouquet was provided by two friends of my wife’s family who owned a small jeweller’s shop near the Hauptplatz [Main Square]. They sent down to Italy for flowers as there was none in the shops in Graz”. The wedding itself still took place in the winter of 1947, shortly after receiving the marriage licence: “My comrades all agreed to their main meal—our wedding breakfast—being served at midday and not in the evening and the chef in the Raubal restau-

rant produced the most delicious-looking food from Army rations” (Lucas 1995, p. 600). According to Lucas, the supply situation of married British soldiers and Austrian-born women was soon comparable to the living conditions of British married couples within the army (Lucas 1995, p. 600). In other cases, the couples decided to marry only after forced separation. Consider, for example, the marriage of Major Gollop, who had been transferred from Villach in 1949: “He had [. . .] met a charming lady while fishing on Lake Ossiach at the time. Sadly, he had to leave Carinthia and start his service in the black continent. A year later he returned briefly to Villach from there without his uniform on a private matter: to the radiant wedding in the town parish church of St. Jakob; Mayor Petschnik then gave a big party with lots of music for the happy bride and groom” (Walzl 2005, p. 34, translation by the author). British–Austrian couples mobilised all their energies for their wedding so that it would meet expectations in terms of clothing—white wedding dress and veil—and food (Hörandner 2007, p. 13f). However, lavish wedding celebrations may have been the exception rather than the rule, and most weddings took place in a simple atmosphere, depending on the military rank of the soldier and the financial means of the wedding couple. Erna B. reports on her wedding in February 1947 at Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna: “We could not offer the guests any food at all. It was a small wedding”.⁶⁴ Their aim was to get married as soon as possible after receiving the marriage licence and to prepare for their future in Britain.

While women who maintained relationships with British soldiers sometimes encountered hostility, this is likely to have changed once the relationships were formalised and a “war bride” started a family with a British man. Most couples and their family and social environment cannot be interviewed today, but Schroppe’s research (Schroppe 2010a, pp. 48–58; see also Schmidlechner 1997, pp. 84–88) shows that a range of attitudes were reflected in her interviews with 18 Austrian ‘war brides’. Few of her interviewees stressed that their husbands were the stubborn ones and that they did not originally think of a relationship or even marriage with a British man, thus distancing themselves from the stereotype of “loose women” whose relationships with Allied soldiers were seen as unpatriotic collaboration. At the same time, when asked about the reactions of family and friends to their romance or marriage with British soldiers, these women generally did not recall any objections.

6. Statistics and Estimates: The Number of British–Austrian Marriages

The question of how many marriages were contracted between Austrian women and British soldiers is not easy to answer. It depends, among other things, on whether weddings took place in Britain or Austria, whether the couples had received permission to marry from the British authorities, and whether these marriages were legally valid according to British and Austrian law. A reliable estimate is further complicated by the fact that thousands of Austrian women emigrated to Britain in the years after the end of the war, as mentioned at the beginning, not only for marrying British soldiers but for economic motivations. UNESCO estimated in 1955 that 18,000 foreign women, not only Germans and Austrians, had come to Britain between 1945 and 1951 to marry. However, this figure did not include those women who had already married abroad and entered as wives (UNESCO 1955, p. 56, Table 15). Before August 1946, i.e., before the relaxation of the marriage ban, 96 applications were submitted by British Army personnel to marry Austrian women. From August 1946 to October of the same year, there were already 511 applications (Schroppe 2010a, p. 68f). Most marriages between British and Austrian women took place in 1947 and 1948, when the number of British troops in Austria was still considerable. In August 1949, the Austrian media reported, “[t]he number of English marriages has dropped sharply, which is not surprising” (Brunnhöfer 2008, p. 151, translation by the author). At the local level, the report of the Municipal Department 2 of the City of Graz for the year 1948 mentioned 28 Austrian women who had married members of the British troops in a civil ceremony. The report points out that in 1947, a few months after the lifting of the marriage ban, this number had been much higher.⁶⁵ The former British soldier, Blake Baker, reports on his

deployment in Styria and on the high number of marriages: “Thanks to their mastery of the German language, many FSS’ers—like me—married Austrian women. I could list at least five marriages for Fürstenfeld alone” (Baker 1995, p. 612, translation by the author). The *Neue Zeit* also reported in August 1955: “232 girls and women, mostly Austrians, have been married off by Englishmen in Styria since 1945”.⁶⁶ This figure did not include those women who left Austria single and married their fiancés in Britain.

For comparison, the following figures are available for Germany: Steinert and Weber-Newth (2006, p. 20) assume that around 10,000 German female spouses and 289 male spouses of British Army personnel emigrated to Britain after World War II. Christopher Knowles (2019, pp. 220–23), based on his research on who was the first British soldier or civilian member of the Control Commission to marry a German woman after World War II, and when the first wedding took place, believes that the figure of 10,000 is too low and suggests that there were at least 15,000 marriages between British men and German women between 1947 and 1951, plus around 500 German men who married British women. Estimates of the number of Austrian-born wives in Britain remain unprecise, just like the number of Austrian-born wives in the U.S.A. (Schmidlechner and Miller 2004, p. 28). Of course, in total numbers, not as many Austrian women married British men as German women married British men.⁶⁷ However, the surviving data suggest that the number of marriages between British soldiers and Austrian women reached at least close to the four-digit range.

7. Immigration and Settlement Process

Austrian women who had received British citizenship upon marriage did not have to expect any major difficulties when entering Britain. They travelled alone or with their children while the soldiers had left Austria at the same time or already beforehand with their troops. After receiving an entry permit, they were transported to Britain on military trains, just as Austrian “war brides” of U.S. American soldiers were brought to Germany on special trains and boarded “war bride” ships to the U.S.A. (Pelz 1996, p. 402f). The journey of Italian–British couples was organised in a similar way: British soldiers travelled to Britain before their wives and organised the immigration of their wives from there, as explained in a guide for married British soldiers in the *Union Jack* as early as November 1945.⁶⁸ Women who intended to marry their fiancés in Britain often first applied for work permits in Britain and married shortly after their arrival. Another possibility was for British men to apply to the authorities for an entry permit for their fiancées. Depending on which route the unmarried couples chose, ex officio requirements had to be met with varying degrees of effort. These obstacles served, among other things, to prevent marriages of convenience (Schropper 2010a, p. 73f).

Erna B. travelled from Vienna to the Austrian state of Carinthia in the spring of 1947, where she stayed at Hotel Annabichl, an accommodation for married British couples. Prior to her departure, she had attended a marriage school organised by the British Army in Vienna. During the train journey, she was plagued by doubts about her decision to emigrate. She believes her misgivings were because she spent the first part of her journey from Vienna to Carinthia alone in a train compartment: “I was desperate to get off and say, ‘I made a big mistake.’”⁶⁹ In Carinthia, where she met all the other women from Austria and Italy who were following their fiancés and husbands to Britain, her fears were allayed. “It was like a mass movement” (Ibid.). She felt optimism and confidence from the fact that many other women were also embarking on an adventurous journey with an uncertain future in Britain.

Not only the train journey, but also the arrival of women from Austria in Britain takes up space in family narratives of British–Austrian couples. “My wife made the journey from Graz in company with other married families; English, Austrian and Italian and was surprised to discover that the cross-Channel ships, although made of steel, do not sink and that England was not perpetually shrouded in thick fog”, reports James Lucas (1995, p. 605) about his wife’s first impression of Britain. Stefanie S. also knows from family stories about

the arrival of her mother, who came from Austria: “The excitement was great when she was not immediately found by my father’s family in the railway station, which was crowded with Austrian women”.⁷⁰ Most Austrian women were welcomed by their husbands and their families at Victoria Station or Liverpool Street Station in London, while some were escorted to other stations in London, such as King’s Cross or Paddington, from where they continued their journey. Only a vanishingly small group of the women arrived in Britain by means of an expensive air journey (Schropper 2010a, p. 74f). As far as taking their personal possessions with them was concerned, the emigration of women from Austria was subject to certain guidelines.⁷¹ In any case, the emigration of women was an economic factor that should not be underestimated. In 1947, the transport of marriage goods to Britain was one of the most important businesses of a Graz-based forwarding company, where 94 transports were already registered at the beginning of that year (Brunnhöfer 2002, p. 75).

Austrian “war brides” in Britain, like Erna B., felt a sense of dashed hope upon their arrival in London. They had emigrated with little or no preparation and had assumed that the privileges they had enjoyed in their homeland as fiancées and wives of British soldiers would continue or even increase. Instead, post-war British life, characterised by housing shortages and food rationing, did not meet these expectations. They were not only disappointed by the country of immigration but also surprised by the social and economic status of their husbands’ families, and the young couples and families faced problems due to temporary housing with family members of their husbands (Schropper 2010a, pp. 75–81). German war brides had similar experiences. “I thought they were all lords back then”, a German-born woman noted in retrospect. “The war was over, and I thought, ‘Oh England, how lovely. That was as far as we thought’” (Steinert and Weber-Newth 2006, p. 24).

Austrian-born Frieda S. and her British husband, Harry S., lived with Harry’s parents when they arrived in Britain. After months, Harry’s aunt and uncle provided a room with a kitchen, where the family lived for almost ten years until they were allocated a council apartment in the London district of Upper Clapton. Today, their daughter, Stefanie S., believes her mother’s expectations of married life in England were disappointed: “I think that not only my mother, but also other Austrian women were motivated partly by economic factors. I mean, obviously I don’t think my mother or any of them would have married somebody they hated but I think economic factors were a pull”.⁷² Not only the financial living conditions, but also the search for a job would have been difficult for Frieda S. because she was met with reservations due to her origin from Austria: “It had to do with discrimination. Because they looked upon her as this horrible Nazi woman who has come from Austria. [. . .] So I think she faced a lot of -. I would not say open discrimination but covert discrimination. I think they call it soft discrimination these days. That it is there but it is not in your face”.⁷³

Erna and Bernhard B. also had to find their way around after their arrival in Britain, both privately and professionally. To build up an independent existence and a home after having started a family, Erna B. worked as a server close to her home south of London, while her husband commuted to work in London; later, she trained as a nurse and worked in this profession until her retirement. In the second half of the 1940s, a period that David Kynaston (2007) termed “austerity Britain”, Austrian-born women like Erna B., who had immigrated after marrying British soldiers, stood in the in-between in more ways than one. After the physical and psychological damage of World War II, a series of governments and their agents propagated idealized notions of home that focused on the importance of motherhood, the need for physical and moral hygiene, and instructions on how to be a good wife. While these ideals were being constructed, due to the nation’s labour needs, British women were being asked to either work part-time or return to work when their children started school. Working-class women, in particular, in the relevant areas of Britain were identified as desirable, albeit temporary, workers, and they were to undertake what was considered “women’s work” in factories, services, and agriculture, rather than, as in the war, doing the “jobs usually done by men”. In either case, the emphasis was upon work as a secondary to the women’s primary role as homemakers (Webster 2006; also see

McDowell 2013, pp. 71–94; Summerfield 1994). The expectations of *white* foreign workers, e.g., from Austria, and Black British workers were different. These women were neither assumed to be responsible for making a home nor to have familial obligations, and they were therefore identified exclusively as workers in post-war British society (Webster 2006). Like all immigrants from Europe and the Commonwealth who shared “the experience of belonging securely neither to the places they had left nor to the place they had chosen to make their home”, Austrian-born women like Erna B. lived in “the limbo of migrant culture, [. . .] a world which grew at the meeting point between the hopes, desires and strategies for survival of the immigrants themselves, and the opportunities made available to them”. (Wills 2017, p. xi). However, unlike Austrian women who had moved to Britain for employment and initially regarded their stay as a kind of interregnum, a time to be endured until a return to Austria and a better future was possible, Austrian-born women like Erna B. were seen both as “foreigners” and as wives of British men, and they had to develop their understanding of marriage, motherhood, domesticity, and work, depending on the respective social and family conditions and according to their own ideas of what was best for them and their families.

Unlike what Frieda S. may have experienced, Erna B. remembers encounters in the first phase after her arrival in which she was not discriminated against as an Austrian “war bride” but was mistaken for a German “war bride”. From then on, she avoided speaking the German language with her daughters. Seventy years after her arrival in Britain, Erna B. still believes that she benefits “from the fact that I am not German”.⁷⁴ Erna B.’s experiences correspond to the research findings of Steinert and Weber-Newth (2006, p. 25), which suggest that a German bride was sometimes introduced to her future parents-in-law by her fiancé as Austrian or Dutch, or that a man advised his fiancée to pass herself off as Irish. The arrival of the wives of British soldiers in Britain coincided with a time when responsibility for Nazi crimes was attributed exclusively to Germany, and this could have had an impact on whether the women felt welcomed or not. At the same time, the biographies of Austrian “war brides” analysed by Schropfer (2010a) and presented by Trestler (2013) reflect their diversity, and it may be agreed with Knowles (2017, p. 169) that it is difficult to generalise and “claim that Austrian war brides were more content in Britain. [. . .] Some German and Austrian war brides settled in Britain and remained married for the rest of their lives. Others, unsurprisingly, found it difficult to cope with cultural differences and unmet expectations and returned home, separated, or divorced”.

“Homesickness is like an illness”.⁷⁵ Erna B. felt a strong longing for Austria, not least because of disappointed expectations and difficult living conditions, which burdened her health in the early years. She also thought about returning to Vienna permanently with her family but dropped these plans because they would not have been “fair” to her husband.⁷⁶ According to Isabel Schropfer, there were two reasons why women decided not to file for divorce and to stay in Britain. First, there was an expectation that women would subordinate their own needs to those of their husbands and children: “[t]here was no option of giving up, because to separate was to fail in a woman’s duty of being a good wife”. Second, these women feared the reactions of their Austrian families and social environment after their return, and they “were too proud to admit that they made the wrong decision by marrying a foreigner” (Schropfer 2010a, p. 80). Instead of returning, Erna B. tried to counter her homesickness by keeping Austrian traditions. She sums up her attitude towards Austrian and British cuisine as follows: “I’d rather have the *Erdäpfel* in Vienna than the *Schnitzel* in England”.⁷⁷ Food and its preparation established a symbolic link to the homeland, to culture and language, to history, and, above all, to the families left behind (Schropfer 2014). In addition to the individual retention of a way of life perceived as Austrian and the cultivation of Austrian traditions in the family environment, networks also alleviated homesickness. Support was offered, for example, by the Austrian Club in London, which was open not only to wives of former British soldiers, but also to people who had emigrated before the war and to female labour migrants. Frieda S. regularly attended the Anglo-Austrian Society (Lehner 2011, pp. 43–77) in London, which had

been founded in 1944 and was called the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society as a political organisation until April 1946.⁷⁸ Erna B. was associated with the Austrian Catholic Society, although she herself had converted to Protestantism before immigrating and marrying her husband.⁷⁹ “It’s funny how one Austrian finds the other. We sniff each other out, don’t we?”⁸⁰ Erna B. reflects on the contact with other Austrians. Even apart from their irregular participation in the meetings of Austrian associations, Erna B. and Frieda S. kept in touch with other women who had immigrated from Austria until their old age.

Emotional sensitivities and the integration of women originating from Austria into their close-knit family and social spheres in Britain are linked to the question of citizenship. The immigration and naturalisation of Austrian wives of Allied soldiers were regulated by national laws after World War II. Until the British Nationality Act in 1948,⁸¹ women acquired British citizenship when they married a British man and lost Austrian citizenship at the same time, even if the marriages had taken place in Austria and the wedding couple were in the country. This went back to the Status of Aliens Act of 1914, according to which a foreign woman who married a British man became a British citizen. From 1948, following amendments to the British Nationality Act, women were no longer granted British citizenship through marriage. They had to apply for it, but this was rarely refused. Provided citizenship was granted while the couple was still outside Britain, the wife was treated as a British citizen, and no further questions were asked when she crossed the border into Britain. In return, a law was passed in Austria that enabled women to retain or regain Austrian citizenship if they had lost it through marriage. Applications for this had to be made within a limited period after the law came into force.⁸²

The extent to which women belonging to the British nation was mediated through British men was apparent in the double standard in British law about marriages to foreigners. While British men who married foreign women could bestow their British nationality on their wives and children, British women who had married foreigners lost their British nationality upon marriage and the rights of citizenship that went with it, including the right to vote. Even after the reform of 1948, which meant that British women who married foreigners could retain their British nationality, they could not pass this British nationality on to their children until 1981 (Webster 2018, p. 202). For Austrian-born women married to British men, the change in the legal situation in 1948 had hardly any effect on the individual decisions regarding their citizenship. Only few women took the opportunity to retain Austrian citizenship or to apply for dual citizenship (Schropper 2010a, p. 74). There are no reliable data on the total number of women of Austrian origin who were naturalised in Britain in the immediate post-war years. In any case, the “immigration peaks” in Britain in the second half of the 20th century fall during the years 1947–1949 (Bauer-Fraiji and Fraiji 1996, p. 296f).

Erna B. was one of those women who refused dual citizenship. After moving to Britain, she opted for sole British citizenship. “How can you belong to two different countries? I thought, ‘I married him. I live here. What I do here is my business, but I live here, and my children have grown up here. This is my country now’”,⁸³ she reflects on her attitude towards this far-reaching decision. Just like Erna B., Frieda S. became a British citizen when she married a British soldier. She had met her husband Harry in Graz in the months after the end of the war in 1945. The Briton later sent an engagement ring by post to Austria—“it was wrapped hidden in jumpers or clothes”⁸⁴—and the two began to take care of the formalities. The marriage took place at the town hall of Stoke Newington in London, one month after Frieda’s arrival in England in March 1947. After the birth of daughter Stefanie in December 1948, a son was born in January 1954. According to her daughter Stefanie, Frieda S. would have liked to have kept her Austrian citizenship: “She complained about it for years”.⁸⁵ Whether Frieda S. had even been informed about the possibility of dual citizenship in 1948 is not known to her daughter.

8. Children of Married British–Austrian Couples

Most children of British soldiers married to Austrian women grew up in Britain, at least temporarily. In some instances, the first child of a British–Austrian family was already born in Austria, while other children followed in Britain.⁸⁶ As varied as the experiences of Austrian “war brides” and their husbands in Britain were, so were the family and social conditions of their children’s upbringing.

The diversity of the experiences of legitimate children of British men and Austrian women in the post-war period results partly from the fact that sometimes their parents’ marriages failed. One example is the subject of a novel by Elfie Donnelly. In the novel, the Austrian mother returned from Britain to Austria together with her child and took a job as a secretary with the U.S. American occupation forces in Linz. The father, in turn, took the child back to Britain without the mother’s consent. “Your husband cannot be legally prosecuted at the moment. The child has British citizenship and, as we now know, is in the country of his birth and with his family” (Donnelly 1999, p. 109, translation by the author), the mother’s lawyer is quoted in the novel, as custody over the child had been awarded to the father. The mother subsequently returned to England as well, faced with the choice either to live in Austria without her child or to remain in Britain until the divorce and the award of custody. The child then grew up with its paternal grandparents in Rugby, while its father worked on cruise ships and its mother was employed in London. It was only through evidence of minor criminal offences by the father, for which he had been convicted, that custody was given to the mother. Mother and child then moved to Vienna in 1954.

Mention should also be made of children whose parents did not settle in either Austria or Britain. Four-year-old Ilse K., for example, moved with her parents to Tanzania, where her father worked as a lawyer from 1953 onwards. On the advice of Austrian relatives, she spent two years at primary school without her family in Graz, before returning to East Africa at her own request and spending her teenage years at a boarding school in Kenya.⁸⁷ Furthermore, there are cases of Austrian women who gave up their children, whom they had already had before marrying British men, for adoption in Austria and moved to Britain with their British husbands and legitimate children (Brunnhöfer 2002, pp. 65–68). Moreover, some British soldiers are likely to have fathered children in Britain before marrying Austrian women. The wives coming from Austria thus sometimes had stepchildren to bring up, provided they learned that they existed. Finally, we also know of a former British soldier who moved to Austria even decades after 1955; Denys Salt, who had been stationed in Austria with the British troops after World War II, married an Austrian woman in 1989 and from then on divided his time between his wife’s apartment in Graz and his apartment in London (Salt 1995, p. 595).

Stefanie S., born in London in December 1948 to Frieda and Harry S., grew up in a permanent British–Austrian family. “She was quite brave coming to a foreign country all on her own, not knowing what she’s getting into”,⁸⁸ Stefanie S. comments on her mother’s decision to immigrate. She reports that she did not experience any discrimination as the daughter of an Austrian woman, in contrast to her mother, who was sometimes confronted with hostility in her social and professional environment. Stefanie S. attended school with other children whose parents had immigrated to Britain. At school, her mother’s migration experience was thus less the exception than the rule. “I think when I was a kid, I just felt I’m English. Not British, English. [. . .] I never felt as if I was foreign. I just thought, well, I’m English, and that’s it”.⁸⁹ After her school education and studies, Stefanie S. lived in Germany for six months as an *au pair* and then took a job in a bank in Düsseldorf. As a reason for her move to Germany, she cites her language skills, which she had not least due to her mother’s efforts to teach her children the German language. After six years, Stefanie S. moved to the U.S.A. for a short time and then returned to London to care for her parents.

The best-known daughter of a British soldier and an Austrian woman in the public eye is Marianne Faithfull. Her parents were the dancer, Eva Hermine von Sacher-Masoch, a great-niece of writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, and Robert Glynn Faithfull, a British Army officer and professor of psychology. Before Marianne Faithfull’s parents met, her

mother had shot a Soviet soldier after being raped by him. “When she married my father, Eva was under the illusion that she was marrying an English gentleman of the kind that you see in films of that period. The terrible black joke was that she married my father because he seemed so *normal*. He was polite and charming and made her laugh and he was so well fed. Peace and normality was what she needed after the tumult of the war and her high-strung family”, Marianne Faithfull (2009, p. 4) wrote in her memoirs about how the relationship between her parents had started. After Marianne Faithfull was born in London in December 1946, the family lived in Ormskirk in Lancashire. However, the marriage between the parents did not last: “She was different. She was difficult. She was foreign. She liked to drink wine at lunch. And she was very spoilt. Only now am I beginning to see how spoilt she was”, wrote Marianne Faithfull about her mother almost 50 years later. Her father, on the other hand, “was ultra-careful with money, and that created other problems. Eva was extravagant and abundant and over-the-top and theatrical. Glynn was the diametric opposite” (Faithfull 2000, p. 6). When Marianne Faithfull was six years old, her parents separated. The mother moved to Reading with her daughter, kept the family afloat with odd jobs, and later worked as a teacher. Marianne Faithfull attended the local convent school: “I was a charity boarder at St. Joseph’s, a situation about which I was constantly reminded. It was very humiliating” (Faithfull 2000, p. 9). Her mother always spoke with an Austrian accent, Marianne Faithfull remembers, and in other respects, her mother also held on to Austrian traditions. On Sundays, they always had *Guglhupf*. Marianne Faithfull tried at the same time to adapt her lifestyle to that of her British friends.⁹⁰

Marianne Faithfull achieved international fame as a pop singer in the 1960s. Her love affair with Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones, whom she had met at a party in 1964, was discussed in the tabloid press. After her successful career as a singer of the British Invasion had come to a hold, she made a comeback as a singer and actress in the late 1970s. Faithfull reflected upon her life story, her family history, and her childhood experiences in two autobiographies and in a BBC TV documentary, although the family history on her father’s side receives less attention than the ancestral line on her mother’s side (Faithfull 2000, pp. 3–19; 2009, pp. 70–84, 142–60).⁹¹

Wolfgang H. was born in 1953 to an Austrian mother and father. In 1954, after the relationship between his parents had ended, his mother Franziska R. met the British soldier, Edward H., a 19-year-old trained shoemaker who had come as a soldier of the Middlesex Regiment to Zeltweg in the Austrian province of Styria, where a requirement airfield was maintained by the British troops. When Edward H. learned of his impending recall from Austria, he was faced with the decision of either leaving Franziska R. and her son or proposing marriage to his Austrian girlfriend. Edward H. and Franziska R. married on 17 August 1954 in Styria. For marriage, permission had to be obtained from military superiors, but, according to Edward H. more than 60 years after the marriage, this would have been no more than a formality at that late stage of the British presence in Austria.

Wolfgang H. only spent the first months of his life in Austria. After his mother and he had moved to Britain to live with his stepfather Edward in 1954, he grew up with his stepfather’s relatives on the island of Jersey. His stepfather soon was posted to Cyprus as a reservist. The mother took on jobs to earn a living while the child learned the English language in kindergarten. Wolfgang H. reports that he did not suffer discrimination as a child because of his Austrian origin. However, his family’s decision to address him with his second first name, “Karl”, had been made consciously. While “Karl” (or “Carl”) is a common name in Britain, his first name, Wolfgang, would have immediately revealed his origin. Wolfgang H., therefore, was even more surprised when, on the day of his mother’s death in 2014, he learned by chance that the British soldier whom his mother had married in 1954 and with whom she had given birth to two more children in Britain was not his biological father, and that he had been conceived in a premarital relationship between his mother and an Austrian man. This late revelation of the family secret had and still has high relevance for the further development of family relations. Wolfgang H. began researching his Austrian father and was able to find out his name in archival sources in Austria. The

further steps he took to find his biological father included internet research and research at the Imperial War Museum in London—with the help of which he verified the stationing period of his British stepfather—as well as a research trip to Austria. Wolfgang H. also had a DNA test conducted via an online platform, through which he was able to find out that a person who most likely was his biological father died in Graz in June 2016. At the time of the interview, Wolfgang H. continued to feel the desire to get to know his half-siblings; however, he considered the chances of meeting them to be low. He gave up his search, at least for the time being, on the one hand because of moral concerns about causing trouble in an “intact” Austrian family, and on the other hand because of the emotional strain that this research would cause his family and himself.⁹²

9. Conclusions

This article sheds light on intermarriages during the Allied occupation in Europe, shifting the focus from the U.S. American experience and the occupation of Germany to British–Austrian marriages in the immediate post-war period. As in Germany, British authorities were discouraging, and marriage in Austria was a bureaucratic and paternalistic affair for soldiers. Although the provisions of the fraternisation ban and the treatment of the civilian population were handled more leniently in Austria than in Germany, since Austria was considered the first “victim” of Nazi Germany, referring to the Moscow Declaration of 1943, the ban on British marriages in Austria and in Germany was lifted simultaneously in mid-1946 after discussions in the British Parliament and corresponding deliberations by the military leadership. Even after the lifting of the marriage ban, however, Austrian women and British soldiers who wanted to marry, such as Erna and Bernhard B., still had to overcome bureaucratic and legal hurdles just like British–German couples. The three steps to marriage, namely obtaining permission from a superior of the British soldier, the six-month period between application and marriage, and the medical and ideological examination of the bride, assumed that marriages with women from the occupation zones could pose a danger to the soldiers and Britain. The intimate questions the women had to answer and the background checks were not based on suitable evidence but were precautionary. On the one hand, the security and protection requirements may have been perceived by some soldiers and their fiancées as harassment and an unnecessary invasion of their privacy. On the other hand, the regulations may have allowed soldiers to end their relationships with Austrian women under the guise of restrictive regulations without fear of negative consequences for themselves, even if the women were pregnant or had already given birth to children from the relationships.

After marrying, most Austrian “war brides” immigrated to Britain. Their personal stories partly interweave with the history of the first generation of British post-war immigrants, although they did not go to Britain for economic reasons, nor were they brought by the British government to power the country’s post-war recovery. While it is possible to draw conclusions from exploring the experiences of some of these women, views of British soldiers can usually only be traced back to the time of their stationing through archival sources. Christopher Knowles argues that historiographical research on German and Austrian “war brides” has, thus far, focused primarily on the perspective of women, “either because the research was conducted as part of a wider study of migration, or because women were more likely to retain links with German or Austrian religious or cultural organisations, which made it possible to identify them later, but not husbands in cases where they had separated or divorced” (Knowles 2017, p. 169). Today, only a few former British soldiers stationed in Austria after 1945 and Austrian “war brides” can still be interviewed. One source for a deeper understanding of family histories is the accounts of children born of these marriages. Further research on the transgenerational transmission of memory in families, but also on the experiences of children from British–Austrian marriages, is desirable, as their origins may have influenced their biographies in different ways and intensities, depending, among other things, on whether they were born at the beginning of

the occupation period or later, the place where they spent their childhood, and their social and family environment.

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Notes

- ¹ Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on Consequences of War (hereinafter: BIK), interview with Erna B., 21 September 2017, conducted by the author, transcript p. 19. To increase readability, this paper includes interview quotes from polished versions of the full-verbatim transcripts.
- ² In this paper, italics are used to highlight the constructed nature of the category *white*. In addition, the capitalisation emphasises that Black and *white* are social constructs and political categories, not real characteristics that can be traced back to the colour of the skin. Being Black in this context does not mean an assignment to an actual or assumed ethnic group but refers to specific attributions and a social position affected by racism.
- ³ The National Archives (hereinafter: TNA), WO 204/11459: Information Services Branch, Austria. Relations with the Austrian Population, 13 May 1945, p. 1. The non-fraternisation measures were first issued by the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF), the joint U.S., British, and Canadian armies under the command of General Eisenhower, which liberated France in 1944 and invaded Germany in April and May 1945. These restrictions were extended when forces occupied Austrian territory.
- ⁴ TNA, WO 204/11459: Information Services Branch, Austria. Relations with the Austrian Population, 13 May 1945.
- ⁵ TNA, FO 1020/3152: Military government staff: policy directives. Non-Fraternisation, 18 and 20 July 1945; TNA 1020/675: Fraternalisation Policy, Non-Fraternalisation, 17 July 1945.
- ⁶ TNA, FO 1020/82: Fraternalisation and behaviour by British Forces in Austria. Allied Commission for Austria (British Element), Planning Section, 30 December 1944.
- ⁷ TNA, FO 1020/675: Fraternalisation Policy. Non-Fraternalization, 17 July 1945.
- ⁸ TNA, FO 1020/675: Fraternalisation Policy. Fraternalisation policy in Austria, 2 July 1945.
- ⁹ Imperial War Museum (hereinafter: IWM) Catalogue Number 10368. Captain Kenneth Oglethorpe, p. 23.
- ¹⁰ IWM Catalogue Number 1591. Parker, Private Papers, no page numbers.
- ¹¹ IWM Catalogue Number 20530. Baker, Private Papers, p. 131.
- ¹² IWM Catalogue Number 6468. Orde, Better Late Than Never, p. 273.
- ¹³ More generally, liaisons between foreign soldiers and local civilians in conflict and post-conflict scenarios embrace the entire spectrum of relationships, from long-term love affairs to sexualised violence. Boundaries between love affairs, “business arrangements”, sex work, and rape are fluid, and often relationships cannot be placed unambiguously in one or another category, as they change in nature just as circumstances surrounding the soldiers and local women change. (Lee 2017, pp. 26–28).
- ¹⁴ TNA, FO 1020/3152: Military government staff: policy directives, Fraternalisation, 1 September 1945/Routine Orders, 4 September 1945.
- ¹⁵ At the end of World War II, rapes occurred in all four Allied zones. Few rapes were reported in the British zone. Cf. (Kerschbaumer 1998, p. 205, ref. 44).
- ¹⁶ See Note 14 above.
- ¹⁷ Consider, for example, the report of Margaret Heard, who lived together with her husband Sergeant John Vernal Federl, who worked for the British Intelligence Service and as a translator in Austria, from 1947 in Donawitz near Leoben and later in Graz: “I don’t recall hearing of any army wives having affairs; plenty of flirtations mind you, when their husbands were away. Perhaps it was because there were so many ‘coffee mornings’ and so much visiting between wives, and the live-in maids didn’t help”. Heard reports that she herself had observed (extramarital) liaisons of British soldiers with Austrian women but had hardly ever had the opportunity to cheat on her British husband with an Austrian herself: “If my husband had been on night duty it would also have been possible for me to be unfaithful! But, what chance did I have with a live-in maid and so many children, although I did have my moments”. IWM Catalogue Number 1048. Heard, Stepping Stones to Austria, p. 68f.

- 18 BIK, interview with Maria S., 29 November 2016, conducted by the author, transcript p. 1. Discrimination against mothers was sometimes transferred to the nonmarital children they had with Allied soldiers, and some “occupation children” report experiencing exclusion as both “children of the enemy” and “illegitimate” children (Stelzl-Marx and Satjukow 2015; Satjukow and Gries 2015). Children of Black G.I.s often experienced racist discrimination (notably, Fehrenbach 2005; Wahl et al. 2016).
- 19 TNA, FO 1060/874: Fraternalisation and marriage with Germans. John B. Mash, Legal Division, US Group CC to the Director Legal Division, British Element CC, Norfolk House, London, 28 January 1945.
- 20 TNA, CAB 129/10/11. Relaxation of the ban on marriages between British servicemen and alien women. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 24 May 1946.
- 21 Field Marshal Alexander Wilkinson reported 20 such extraordinary cases in the British zone of Austria (Lewis 2013, p. 18). The British War Minister Jack Lawson, on the other hand, mentioned in July 1946 the marriage of 18 soldiers who had been prisoners of war in Austria and had promised marriage to Austrian women before March 1945. Lawson, House of Commons, 23 July 1946, vol. 425 c326W.
- 22 TNA, CAB 129/10/11. Relaxation of the ban on marriages between British servicemen and alien women. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 24 May 1946. Cf. TNA, FO 32/11599: Marriage Allowance. Marriages between British personnel and women of other nationalities.
- 23 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Lindsay, 21 August 1945, vol. 413 c469W, and 18 October 1945, vol. 414 c1358.
- 24 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Stokes, 12 February 1946, vol. 419 c54W.
- 25 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Rees-Williams, 29 March 1946, vol. 421 cc701–85.
- 26 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Stokes, 2 April 1946, vol. 421 c145W.
- 27 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Symonds, 2 April 1946, vol. 421 c1090.
- 28 TNA, FO 1020/68: Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) proposed organisation and responsibilities of ACA (BE). Statement of Progress for A.F.H.Q. for Period 16th–31st March 1945. Allied Commission for Austria (British Element).
- 29 “Mr. Paget (Northampton): Does ‘enemy nationals’ apply to Austria, because we were ever at war with that country? Mr. Levy: The ban, in fact, does not extend to Austria. Mr. Paget: I have two letters about it. Mr. Levy: The minister may clear up that point”. Levy, House of Commons, vol. 421 cc2378–459.
- 30 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Levy, 15 April 1946, vol. 421 cc2378–459 (see also Knowles 2017, p. 229).
- 31 Hansard, House of Commons, Edelman, 16 April 1946, vol. 421 cc403–4W.
- 32 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Nally, 4 June 1946, vol. 423 cc295–6W.
- 33 TNA, CAB/10/11. Relaxation of the ban on marriages between British Servicemen and alien women. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War. Appendix, 24 May 1946. While blanket explanations for a British man’s choice of an Austrian (or Italian) woman do not do justice to the couples’ individual relationships, some memoirs and diaries of former British soldiers indeed leave the impression that the Austrian population was compared to the Italian population, where many of them were stationed before the end of the war and their deployment in Austria. However, when British ‘officials’ such as Benn Levy used the comparison of Italian and Austrian women, it may not only have had to do with Italian women wanting to marry British men, but the numerical ‘problem’ within the country of Italian POWs and British women wanting to marry may also have influenced the discourse. The arrival of enemy prisoners of war in Britain from 1941 and their use to alleviate the chronic wartime domestic labor shortage, e.g., their deployment into labor battalions and billeting on farms, had meant that they came into close contact with civilians, following attempts by government agencies to limit civilian female civilian “fraternisation” with both more than 150,000 Italian (and over 400,000 German) prisoners of war between 1939 and 1948 (Moore 2013).
- 34 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Nally, 4 June 1946, vol. 423 cc 295–6W.
- 35 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Sorensen, 4 June 1946, vol. 423 cc 295–6W.
- 36 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Muff, 18 July 1946, vol. 142 cc636–40.
- 37 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Lawson, 23 July 1946, vol. 425 c326W.
- 38 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Driberg, 30 July 1946, vol. 426 cc144–5W.
- 39 Ehen zwischen Engländern und Österreicherinnen, in: Neue Zeit, 16 May 1946, p. 2.
- 40 TNA, CAB 128/6/11, Conclusion of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Thursday, 25 July 1946, at 10 a.m., p. 236.
- 41 Hansard, House of Lords, Nathan, 31 July 1946, vol 142 cc1147–8. See also TNA, FO 1030/174: Marriages with ex-enemy nationals. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard). House of Lords, Official Report. Vol. 142, No. 126, 31 July 1946, p. 1148.
- 42 Engländerinnen wollen deutsche Kriegsgefangene heiraten, in: Neue Zeit, 4 July 1947, p. 2.
- 43 Hochzeit eines britischen Offiziers, in: Neue Zeit, 27 November 1946, p. 3.
- 44 TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. Marriages in Austria. Allied Commission for Austria (BE), 24 October 1946, p. 2.
- 45 TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. Foreign Marriages. List “B”. H.Q. Vienna, 9 November 1946.

- 46 Hansard, House of Commons debates, Levy, 15 April 1946, vol. 421 cc2378–459.
- 47 TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. Marriages in Austria. Allied Commission for Austria (BE), 24 October 1946, p. 1.
- 48 Vor Ehe erst nach Britain, in: Neue Zeit, 11 August 1946, p. 2. Translation by the author.
- 49 See Note 47 above.
- 50 TNA, FO 741/11: Marriages of German and Austrian women to British servicemen. Marriage to Austrians. Allied Commission for Austria (British Element), 2 January 1947; TNA, FO 1030/174: Marriages with ex-enemy nationals; TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy; Lieut-General Sir James Steele to the Undersecretary of State for War, 30 October 1946; TNA, FO 1020/1281. Screening of Austrian women for marriage with members of British forces.
- 51 TNA, FO 1020/1281: Screening of Austrian women for marriage with members of British forces. B. G. Intelligence Organisation Allied Commission for Austria (B.) to MI5, The War Office, 15 August 1946.
- 52 TNA, FO 1020/683 Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy; Lieut-General Sir James Steele to the Undersecretary of State for War, 30 October 1946. TNA, FO 1020/1281. Screening of Austrian women for marriage with members of British forces.
- 53 TNA, FO 741/11: Marriages of German and Austrian women to British servicemen. Marriage to Austrians. Allied Commission for Austria (British Element), 2 January 1947. A decree was published by the Ministry of the Interior in March 1947: Erlass des Amtes der o.ö. Landesregierung vom 21. März 1947 an alle Bezirkshauptmannschaften in Oberösterreich und an die Magistrate Linz und Steyr., Gegenstand: Eheschliessung zwischen Angehörigen der brit. Streitkräfte und österr. Staatsangehörigen. Archiv der Stadt Linz, PrA 1930-1956, GZ 001-2-1, 1945-1956, Erlässe, Verordnungen. I thank Philipp Rohrbach for bringing this document to my attention.
- 54 BIK, interview with Erna B., conducted by the author, 21 September 2017, transcript, p. 18.
- 55 TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. HQ British Troops in Austria, Subject: Local Marriages, 23 May 1947.
- 56 TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. Headquarters ACA (BE) an HQ HTA. Marriages, 22 August 1947.
- 57 TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. S.H. Smith, Legal Division, Allied Commission for Austria (British Element). Marriage in Austria. 5 May 1947.
- 58 TNA, FO 741/11: Marriages of German and Austrian women to British servicemen. Local Marriages. Allied Commission for Austria (British Element). 1 February 1947; TNA, 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. Local Marriages - Legal aspects, 23 January 1947.
- 59 TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. Legality of Marriage within the Lines, 5 July 1947.
- 60 Eheschließungsrekord im Mai, in: Neue Zeit, 11 July 1947, p. 3.
- 61 TNA, FO 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. Marriage to Austrian Nationals, Juli 1947.
- 62 Gelten Ehen vor einer Besatzungsmacht auch in Österreich? in: Neue Zeit, 20 May 1947, p. 2.
- 63 IWM, Photo VIE.1553. Undigitized collections.
- 64 BIK, interview with Erna B., 16 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 6.
- 65 Stadtarchiv Graz, Tätigkeitsbericht, Magistratsabteilung 2, Stadt Graz, 1948.
- 66 Abschiedsfeier der Briten in Graz, in Neue Zeit, 14 August 1955, p. 1.
- 67 In this context, estimates of the number of soldiers stationed in Austria should be mentioned: in May 1945, about 700,000 Allied soldiers were stationed in Austria, and for autumn 1945, the total strength was estimated at “only” 180,000 to 200,000 Soviet, 75,000 British, 70,000 American and 40,000 French army members (Stelzl-Marx 2012, p. 498) In the following months and years, the British forces rapidly reduced their contingents: “In January, 19,000 British soldiers were discharged. Several units of the British Army were withdrawn from Austria to train other units”, according to a newspaper report from February 1946. (Britische Besatzungstruppen herabgesetzt, in Neue Zeit, 6 February 1946, p. 1., translation by the author)
- 68 IWM Catalogue Number 24380. E.R. Zenthon.
- 69 BIK, interview with Erna B., 21 September 2017, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 12. Translation by the author.
- 70 BIK, interview with Stefanie S., 24 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 4.
- 71 TNA, 1020/683: Local marriage between ACA personnel and aliens: policy. Local Marriages - Legal aspects, 23 January 1947.
- 72 See Note 70 above.
- 73 BIK, interview with Stefanie S., 24 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 6.
- 74 BIK, interview with Erna B., 21 September 2017, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 5. Translation by the author.
- 75 BIK, interview with Erna B., 16 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 3. Translation by the author.
- 76 BIK, interview with Erna B., 21 September 2017, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 15. Translation by the author.
- 77 See Note 75 above.

- 78 BIK, interview with Stefanie S., 24 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 27.
- 79 BIK, interview with Erna B., 16 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 5f. Translation by the author.
- 80 BIK, interview with Erna B., 21 September 2017, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 4. Translation by the author.
- 81 The British Nationality Act in 1948 was a major legislative change regulating immigration, as it conferred the status of British citizen on all Commonwealth subjects and recognized their right to work and settle in the UK and to bring their families with them.
- 82 Trotz Heirat mit Ausländern österreichische Staatsbürgerschaft, in: *Neue Zeit*, 15 May 1948, p. 2; TNA, FO 741/11: Marriages of German and Austrian women to British servicemen; Amendment of the law relating to the nationality of married women. Memorandum by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 20 June 1946. TNA, CAB 129/10/36.
- 83 See Note 76 above.
- 84 See Note 70 above.
- 85 BIK, interview with Stefanie S., 24 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 31.
- 86 BIK, interview with Sandra J. and Janet R., 22 September 2016, conducted by the author.
- 87 BIK, interview with Ilse K., 13 January 2016, conducted by the author.
- 88 BIK, interview with Stefanie S., 24 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 21.
- 89 BIK, interview with Stefanie S., 24 September 2016, conducted by the author, transcript, p. 32.
- 90 I am indebted to Barbara Stelzl-Marx (BIK) for this information.
- 91 For further information cf. (Winterberg 2014, pp. 15–20), and the documentary “Who Do You Think You Are?—Marianne Faithfull” on BBC1 from 2012.
- 92 BIK, interview with Wolfgang H., 14 August 2017, conducted by the author.

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