

1930 to 1940, decade of conflicts

- World depression, collapse of banks.
- 1929 to 1933: unemployment rate raises from 8,8 to 26%.
- May 1934: Dollfuß proclaims a new constitution. End of democracy, the dawn of „Austrofascism“.
- July 1934: assassination of Dollfuß by the National Socialists.
- March 1938: Schuschnigg resigns, Seyß-Inquart and his cabinet passes a decree that regulates the annexation of Austria into the Third Reich.
- September 1939: The outbreak of the Second World War.

Social politics

- Despite newly gained independence of women after First World War, a complete shift in thinking did not follow.
- Men were still supposed to „rule the roost“. They neither helped in housekeeping nor in raising children, even if they were unemployed.
- Married and professionally active women in particular had too little time to additionally engage themselves in political or labour organisations.
- Young girls had far less access to education than boys did, they typically had jobs as auxiliary workers.
- On the onset of the world depression, attempts were made to oust women from the working world; married women were dismissed.

Women and Job

- Double-earners Act: directed against women in state service. If the income of a man reached 340 Schillings per month, his wife was forced to resign – irrespective of her education or qualifications.
- If a female civil servant got married, she had to quit her job.
- Only as teachers did women have real promotion prospects. In 1930 their salaries were made equal of those of men.
- Equal rights were still not given, though. In Vorarlberg, Tirol and Salzburg female teachers were supposed to remain unmarried. In Upper Austria (Oberösterreich) they were banned from marrying for a four-year period, in Styria (Steiermark) they were allowed to marry teachers only and in Carinthia (Kärnten) only after 15 years of service. Only in Vienna, Lower Austria (Niederösterreich) and in Burgenland were no regulations in this respect.

Marriage-Law

- Inscrutable and unclear, strongly bound to religious visions.
- Reforms of legislation were blocked by Christian-social party. Wives stayed with their husbands, even if their lives had become unbearable to them.
- This was frequently caused by men's alcoholism. Financial ruin, violence, prostitution and diseases were the results.
- Separation: both parties could remarry; not possible for Catholics.
- Divorce: life partnership was annulled, neither party was allowed to remarry.
- Compromise solution dispensation marriage.
- In default of any reforms in matrimonial law, family tragedies frequently were direct results.

Abortion I

Reasons for a rise in abortion figures:

- Changed understanding of moral values, extramarital relations were tolerated as long as they did not result in pregnancy. On getting pregnant, the woman was ostracized.
- Housing shortage, high cost of living, unemployment.
- Elderly women, frequently very dutiful and with many children often decided to have an abortion. They did not want to deprive their husbands of having sex in order to prevent them from searching for it outdoors.
- Particularly affected were women who were bound to live in celibacy.

Abortion II

- Unmarried pregnant women frequently lost their jobs. Feeble excuses were seized upon to justify their dismissal, as it violated the existing law.
- Only 13% of those women who decided in favour of having the child, could return to their jobs after giving birth.
- Because of this hopeless situation, many women gave themselves in the hands of bunglers, although the consequences of an abortion carried out by a non-professional were well known.

Women in the Fascists period

- Nationalism ousted women from public life.
- They were supposed to be housewives and mothers of many healthy children and they were denied any intellectual faculties.
- Any idea of emancipation was rejected:
„The word of women's emancipation is merely invented bei Jewish intellect [...] the heroism that a man brings into action on the battlefield, the woman brings into action in an everlasting patient devotion, in everlasting suffer and endurance. Every child she gives birth to is a battle that she wins for the existance or loss of her nation.“ (Hitler, Reden und Proklamationen. Domarus.)
- Women were exploited as needed, brought into action in whatever way and wherever the regime needed them at that moment.
- Some of the women imprisoned in camps, were also forced to prostitution.

Women and the beginning of the Second World War

- Fathers, husbands, sons were mobilized. Overnight, women had to arrange everything by themselves.
- They took care of their families, children, problems at school and of diseases.
- Additionally, they were obliged to take over the jobs of those men who were in the army. This frequently meant working in the armaments industry. This could be hard physical work, but leniency was not exercised.
- In bigger cities, hardly any food was available, another big challenge for women.
- If they were Jewish or married to a Jew, they were humiliated and chased, they lived in constant danger.

Women in the Resistance I (selection)

Irma Trksak (1917 -)

- Already in childhood, she and her three brothers and sisters helped her father, a social democrat and a trade-union official, to distribute the banned workers' newspaper.
- She was active in the Resistance on Czech and Slovak sides, which were the largest groups of resistance in Austria during the Nazi period. She was arrested in 1941 and detained in the notorious Polizeigefängnis Rossauer Lände in Vienna. In 1942, she was transported to the women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück. Together with eight other women she successfully escaped.
- Irma Trksak's life story was written down in Cécile Cordons book: „Ich weiß, was ich wert bin“, published by Mandelbaum Verlag.

Women in the Resistance II (selection)

- **Rosa Jochmann** (1901 – 1994)
Working woman, functionary in a trade union, 'Reichssecretary' of Women's Central Committee (Frauen-ZK), member of the executive committee of the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ). In 1934 one of the founders of the underground Revolutionary Socialists (RS). Imprisoned by the Gestapo, in 1940 deported to Ravensbrück.
- **Stefanie Kunke** (1908 – 1942)
Member of Young Socialist Workers (Sozialistische Arbeiter-Jugend) and of the Central Committee (ZK) of the Revolutionary Socialist Youths (Revolutionäre Sozialistische Jugend). Imprisoned in 1938, deported in 1939. She wrote fairy tales and poems. Transported to Auschwitz to help build the camp in 1942, where she died of typhus.
- **Elisabeth Lauscher** (1913 – 1973)
Communist, from 1934 on prosecuted for political reasons. After the annexation of Austria (Anschluss) active in the Resistance. Imprisoned in 1943. Actively involved in rescue operations of comrades sentenced to death.

Women in the Resistance III (selection)

- **Dr. Käthe Leichter** (1895 - 1942)

PhD in political science (Staatswissenschaft), commentator on politics and current affairs, responsible for gender politics in the Vienna Chamber of Labour, after 1934 official in the underground Revolutionary Socialists, imprisoned in 1938. She presumably died in one of the first 'gas wagons'.

In one of her poems she wrote:

*And
whoever sees us, sees the furrows written in our faces by the grief,
sees the marks of physical and mental torture that branded us
forever.*

*And whoever sees us, sees the anger that brightly flashes in our
eyes, sees the rejoicing shouts of freedom, that completely
occupies our hearts.*

Decade of conflicts

- World depression, high rates of unemployment
- Austrian civil war 1934
- Austrofascism, end of democracy
- Annexation into the Third Reich
- National-Socialists' regime
- Outbreak of the Second World War

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