

Diplomkaufmann Karl Löwy (Lowy)

Born: July 13, 1902

Birthplace: Oggau, Burgenland, Austria

Category: Ph.D. candidate

Residence: Eisenstadt, Austria

Citizenship: German-Austrian

Karl Löwy was the son of the antiques dealer Maria Emma Löwy, *née* Werndorfer (born March 23, 1856, in Oslip [Gschies 109]), and Maximilian Löwy, also known as Miksa (born June 13, 1865, in Oggau; died June 23, 1923 in the Wiedner Hospital in Vienna). They were married June 30, 1891, in Mattersdorf. Karl's father worked in Eisenstadt in the famous Wolf Winery.

Karl Löwy had a brother, Ignatz (born June 27, 1892, in Oggau), and three sisters: Gisela (1898-1931), Hermine (1897-1975), and Vera (Frieda). Karl and Martha Braun (born January 20, 1913, in Piesting) were married in Wiener Neustadt on December 22, 1931.

After attending the Commercial College in Ödenburg/Sopron, Karl Löwy enrolled at the Vienna University of World Trade in 1920. After six semesters on the diploma studies, he successfully completed the examination for a master's degree in economics (*Diplomkaufmann*) on 20 November 1923. Starting September 1925, he taught at the newly established Commercial College in Eisenstadt. Probably in connection with this professional activity, he completed the teacher training programme, which was dedicated to the training and further education of teachers at commercial schools, at the University of World Trade in the academic year 1926/27. In the summer semester of 1931, Löwy re-enrolled in the same university with the goal of earning a doctorate in economics. His dissertation, *Viticulture in Austria: Economic-Geographic Studies* was submitted on January 20, 1938, only a few weeks before the entry of the German Wehrmacht into Austria. He had paid the necessary fees required for admission to the exam on January 12. Despite approval of the dissertation, in which two professors of the university concurred, and authorization given for the second exam, he was not allowed to take it after the *Anschluss*, with explicit reference to his Jewish identity: "Jews are not permitted to take the exam." Löwy was thus one of the few Jewish PhD students denied the completion of the doctoral studies on the basis of "racial" reasons by the University for World Trade. He also lost his teaching position at the Eisenstadt Commercial College "because of necessary personnel changes," as the anti-Semitic purges were described in the dismissal letter of March 15, 1938.

Karl and his wife, who was pregnant with their son Paul, and their then four-year-old daughter, Ilse (born September 2, 1933 in Wiener Neustadt), managed to get American visas that arrived April 12, 1938. In anticipation of the *Anschluss*, they had already applied for the visas in February and sold the house on Ruster Street, which they had bought in 1936, only a week before the Wehrmacht invaded Austria.

Before their departure to North America, the Löwy family experienced numerous hardships. Because of his dismissal from the Eisenstadt Commercial College, Karl had no income, and the house on Ruster Street was "guarded," until their departure, by Hitler Youth. It must be assumed

that Karl and his family were subjected to the same harassment as all other Jewish men and women wanted to leave the German Reich. Presumably, the Löwy family also had to pay the so-called “Reich Flight Tax” [Reichsfluchtsteuer], and they had to declare in writing that they would never return to Austria. To prevent gold pieces she had inherited from falling into the hands of the Nazis, Martha – as she wrote in the Autobiography *Falling Uphill* – “disposed of” of them in the cesspool.

The road to emigration led the Löwy family across the German Reich to Hamburg. From there, in May 1938, they boarded the S.S. Hamburg, an ocean liner of the Hamburg-America line which had been commissioned by Hapag for overseas voyages in January 1931 and was to sink off Saßnitz on March 5, 1945 as a result of a mine hit (Kludas 1990, pp. 109 and 154). After a week-long trans-Atlantic voyage to New York (May 13 - May 20, 1938), they arrived in New York destitute. The family had “sold” everything, with the funds deposited into a special account to cover living expenses and the travel costs for emigration. They were allowed to take only eight dollars out of Germany, which was exactly the amount to be paid when entering the United States, the head tax. The family didn’t even have enough money to rent deck chairs on the ocean liner. A German family rented one and let Ilse share it with their daughter, Doris, who was about the same age. At least, Karl and his family were permitted to ship furniture to the United States, with every stick counted and evaluated and were allowed to keep their wedding rings along with some pieces of jewelry of little monetary value. The proceeds from the sale of the house on Ruster Street in Eisenstadt apparently fell to the German Reich.

Upon their arrival in the United States, the family name was anglicized, from *Löwy* to *Lowy*. Karl and his family were met in New York by his sister Hermine (Minna), who was married to Heinrich Schipper. Although Karl’s sister and brother-in-law had sponsored Karl and his family, they did not make them feel welcome. Heinrich was a member of the German-American Bund, which, with its 25,000 members, was not only German-friendly, but also National Socialist oriented and built according to the ‘leader principle’ (Schenderlein 2017, p. 103). And more than seven and a half decades later, Karl's daughter Ilse remembers that the Jewish refugee family from Eisenstadt was received by Hermine with the Hitler salute (e-mail of November 13, 2014)!

At last Karl and his family, which had grown to four through the birth of his son, Paul, were safe. His mother-in-law, Gisela Braun (born November 10, 1875 in Sopron/Ödenburg; maiden name Fuchs), and her sister-in-law, Rosa Rado (born May 6, 1881), were also able to leave the German Reich - albeit considerably later than Karl with his family and under conditions of a tightened policy of persecution.

After her husband, Berthold Rado, had taken his own life (March 1910), following the diagnosis of a brain tumor, and until her emigration, Rosa lived in Piesting with her three children: Hans, Elisabeth, and Margarete. Initially, Rosa’s family lived with her brother, Jakob, and her sister-in-law, Gisela, who, as a university-trained dentist, taught Rosa general dentistry. After becoming established, Rosa moved to Wöllersdorfer Street # 7 and opened her own dental office: *Atelier Rosa Rado*. On November 10, 1938, the day after the so-called *Reichspogromnacht*, Rosa was robbed of 1,000 Reichsmark, furniture, and jewelry by gendarmerie and SS; some dental instruments and other items were not confiscated. In addition, her practice was closed. Subsequently, her house in Piesting was auctioned and sold, with no say on her part. The winner of the auction, who was awarded the house in March 1939, was the roofer [*Dachdeckermeister*]

Ernst M. Since November 1934, he had been a member of the then-still-illegal NSDAP and the National Socialist Motorist Corps, and he was the cell leader of the NSDAP local Piesting group (since 1938). In the spring of 1939, Rosa was able to emigrate to Palestine, where her son Hans already lived. As the historian Werner Sulzgruber (2013, p. 99) reported, Rosa enforced a provision from Tel Aviv after World War II. In 1950 she concluded a judgment: against the payment of 10,000 Schilling, with the aforementioned roofer Ernst and his wife Hilde M., and recognized the validity of the auction of 1939.

Like her husband, Dr. Jakob Braun (born June 22, 1872 in Wiener Neustadt; died September 22, 1936 in Baden nearby Vienna), Gisela Braun was a respected citizen of Piesting, where she had worked as a dentist until the *Anschluss*. In the aftermath of the aforementioned *Reichspogromnacht*, she, too, was robbed of all valuables and monies, and henceforth the severely diabetic widow was almost destitute. It wasn't until 1939 that she received her transit visa to Great Britain. On August 31, 1939, the day before the German attack on Poland, she was able to leave Vienna for London.

However, unlike her daughter Martha and her son-in-law Karl, Gisela was not allowed to take any personal valuables into exile. Like her sister-in-law, even her wedding ring was stolen. As she had been born in Sopron, Gisela fell under the Hungarian quota for an American visa. Therefore, she had to wait longer for the required documents than her Austrian-born children. Finally, her visa to North America arrived in October 1941. She found a berth on a Greek cargo ship that was part of a convoy. The North Atlantic had become a hard-fought war zone in December of that year because of Hitler's Declaration of War on the U.S. Her ship became separated from the convoy, and it was thought lost. On January 20, 1942, she arrived in Canada "after much drama," as her granddaughter Ilse Nusbaum wrote in retrospect (email dated October 7, 2014). From Canada, she went to the United States, where she lived with Karl and Martha Löwy in the winter months, and in the summer months with her son, Dr. Rudolf Braun (born August 25, 1902), and his family.

Rudolf had taken over the medical practice in Piesting after his father's death, but, in the context of the *Anschluss*, he and his mother Gisela had been forced to sell their house and land in Piesting. Rudolf sailed to New York in the summer of 1938 with his wife Liesel (née Hertz) and son Peter (born 1935 in Piesting). He practiced medicine in Connecticut, first in Bridgeport, and later in Fairfield. Rudolf, who died on September 27, 1986, was buried in Connecticut, as was his mother Gisela, who died in 1954 at the age of 79.

Like his older brother, Dr. Rudolf Braun, Josef (born in Piesting February 29, 1904), escaped from Austria in 1938. Both families were sponsored by their mother's sister, Bertha Breiner, who lived in Bridgeport. Josef, his wife Edith (born August 2, 1906 in Vienna; maiden name Gonda) and son Fritz (now Fred, born 1932 in Vienna), sailed to the United States from Antwerp. After the *Anschluss*, Josef had been forced into the infamous 'scrubbing' in which a Viennese mob forced Jews to clean sidewalks under the most humiliating conditions. His store *Sportfex*, in which Josef had, until then, sold sports equipment and sportswear, was smeared with the inscription "Jew," and was later "Aryanized" – that is, expropriated without compensation by the National Socialist state and handed over to a non-Jewish new owner. After initial hardships, Josef established himself there professionally. As chief engineer, Josef later worked in Urban Planning, Construction and Product Development.

Several other members of the families of Karl Löwy and his wife were forced to emigrate or were murdered after the *Anschluss*. Among the former was Alexander Braun (born March 21, 1871 in Kobersdorf; died 1959 in Israel). One of the four brothers of Dr. Jakob Braun, Alexander had been the president of the Jewish community of Baden from 1919 to 1930. In 1939, he fled to Palestine with his wife Hedwig (born 1881, maiden name Wotiz), who had been president of the Jewish Women's Charity Society of Baden until the *Anschluss* of Austria.

Alexander's brother, Leopold (born 1876 in Wiener Neustadt), and his wife Louise (née Wotiz) fled from Baden to Mexico. The couple's six children also survived the Holocaust, two by hiding in Vichy France and the others by emigrating. However, the husband of daughter Helene, Ludwig Lackenbacher (born February 18, 1904 in Vienna), was arrested in Paris on July 17, 1942, during a notorious roundup called „Rafle du Vélodrome d’Hiver“. Subsequently, he was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau via the French camp of Pithiviers. In the Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz, Ludwig was murdered on August 26, 1942. Helene, on her part, succeeded in escaping with her children to Vichy France. From there, she managed to reach Mexico via Spain and Portugal.

Karl’s brother, Ignatz Löwy, was deported from Vienna to the Theresienstadt ghetto in March 1943 and from there, at the end of September 1944, to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he was murdered.

The mother of Karl and Ignatz, Maria Werndorfer Löwy (known as Emma), escaped to Belgrade during the Second World War, where her daughter Vera (aka Frieda) Jovanovich lived. Emma died in the bombing of the Yugoslav capital, ordered by the fanatic General, Alexander Löhr in April 1941.

Thus, it was not only the former ‘World Trade’ doctoral candidate, Karl Löwy, with his wife and two children, who were victims of the Nazi regime. Numerous other relatives of the paternal and maternal line, who until March 1938 had been involved in Austrian society in the social, economic, or cultural fields, were also robbed of their property, stripped of their freedom, driven into exile, or killed after the *Anschluss*.

Karl Lowy initially worked in the stockroom of a department store in Detroit, unloading crates of merchandise. English was the standard language of the family, not only in the workplace and in public spaces, but also in private life. Resuming his studies at *Wayne State University* in Detroit, Karl earned a master’s degree in economics and subsequently worked as a certified public accountant. Shortly before he planned to return to Austria in the fall of 1970 with his wife for the first time after the expulsion in the year 1938, he suffered a heart attack in August. Treatment at Plymouth General Hospital in Detroit could only delay death for a few weeks. On October 6, 1970, Karl Lowy died from the consequences of the infarction. A day later, he was buried at the Hebrew Memorial Park Cemetery in Mount Clemens, Michigan. His wife survived him by 38 years: She died March 1, 2008, in Los Angeles, at the age of 95.

Author: Johannes Koll

Translation from German: Ilse Nusbaum

Postscript:

On July 26, 2017, Ass.Prof. Dr. Johannes Koll presented the first copy of the collective volume on "Cleansings" at Austrian Universities in 1934 – 1945 to Ilse Nusbaum, daughter of Karl Lowy, in Los Angeles, California. Her inquiry to the Vienna University of Economics and Business regarding her father's doctoral dissertation, gave the impetus to the memorial project from which the Memorial Book emerged.

For internet links, historical sources and source references please refer to the German version.