Thinking Cosmopolitan or How Joseph became Joe Buttinger

Introduction

“Mr. Buttinger was such a hero that if he had returned he would have become Chancellor.”

The former Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky on Joseph Buttinger

On May 27, 1932, the Austrian parliament approved a new government that should change the democratic course the country had pursued since the end of the First World War. The new chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß now was in charge of the country’s leadership. On October 1, he used a so-called “emergency degree”, a wartime relic, to rule the country without the approbation of the Austrian parliament. That was the hour of birth of Austria’s first dictatorship. The consequences for the people were fatal. Unliebsame Personen as “unpleasing” persons were called at that time had more and more problems living a normal life. Particularly intellectuals who were engaged in the ideas of psychoanalysis, neopositivism, or austromarxism (socialism) had to fear reprisals from the government. Life became very hard for the government’s opponents, but for most of these persons, the situation turned from bad to worse with the incorporation of Austria into Hitler’s German Reich in 1938. So-called “enemies of the government” were forced to emigrate - and many of them did so. According to a 1941 Office of Strategic Service memorandum, more than 40,000 Austrians had immigrated to the United States during the three years since the “Anschluss” in 1938.

This paper is about one of those who emigrated as a result of ideological reasons. It describes the life of the former Socialist leader, International Rescue Comitee (IRC) founding member, and writer Joseph Buttinger who had to flee his native country to

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1 I would like to thank the Botstiber Foundation for its generous support of my work at the University of New Orleans. I would also like to thank my mentor at UNO Günter Bischof for his advice in the writing of this paper and for inviting me to UNO to participate in his “Quiet Invaders” research project supported by the Botstiber Foundation.


start a new life in an unfamiliar continent like many of Austria’s “unpleasing Persons”.
The main intention of this paper is to depict how and why Buttinger integrated in to his
new homeland and when he became a “real American”. The description of his difficult and eventful youth when he worked his way up from a poor agricultural servant with little perspectives to a respected leader of one of Austria’s largest parties is also of interest here. On the one hand it will help us find answers on the paper’s primary purpose. On the other hand a biography about a person with a strong will such as Buttinger possessed is not possible without a description of his fascinating personal background that characterized the development of his exceptional personality.

A further task of the paper is to ask whether he came to the United States as a so-called “quiet invader” as E. Wilder Spaulding named those Austro-Americans who integrated “so quietly and with so little to say about the glories of the old monarchy or the charm of the young republic that Americans are surprised to learn that they were ever anything but American.”6 Another point of interest is whether it was easy for Buttinger to immigrate into the States. In this context, immigration laws of the United States during the sensitive period of the “Anschluss era” are also of great interest.

**A Poor Rural Boy - Buttinger’s Childhood**

Joseph Buttinger’s youth was a time full of hardship and poverty. His father Anton came from a poor rural family from the village of Lohnsburg in the Austrian state of Upper Austria. Life was hard in the countryside at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. Most of the numerous members of rural families lived together in a single house. There were no “modern” amenities such as electrical light or indoor plumbing. Peasants lived from what they could harvest from their fields. Goods such as salt, pepper and sugar were rare on the farmers’ tables. Coffee, if ever, was served only on holidays.7 Buttingers father Anton was one of 12 children. This was not unusual at the countryside. The region of Upper Austria belonged to an agricultural area characterized by the growing of cereals. In that region peasants needed fewer servants than in other more labor-intensive agricultural branches.

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There was no chance for Buttinger’s father to find a job on the parental farm, for only the oldest male child was entitled to inherit the farm. Anton Buttinger hence had to do odd jobs wherever he could find them. Like his brothers he worked as agricultural servant before he got a job in the road building business bringing him to the neighboring German province of Bavaria. In the spring of 1905 he met his later wife, a poor Bavarian orphan who already had a child. She was employed at a local farm. He fell in love with her and married her after a few weeks. The marriage resulted in the birth of three children. The first was Joseph, born on April 30 1906.

Anton’s salary barely sufficed to feed the family. The family’s Nutrition consisted mainly of potatoes and bread. His efforts to grant his family a better life by accepting various different jobs brought the Buttingers to several places in Germany during young Joseph’s youth. In his memoires, he stated that poverty was omnipresent during these years. He wrote how he went barefooted through German streets collecting horse manure to dung his mother’s small vegetable garden. Buttinger described his childhood before the war as a very annoying time. Because of the family’s impecuniousness they could not by toys or books. So there was not much to do for the children except playing in the dirty streets.

August 1914 changed the life of the family dramatically. Like millions of other males in Austria-Hungary and her wartime ally Germany, Joseph’s father was drafted to serve in the Austrian Army during the First World War. During the first war year when he, as an Austrian citizen, was employed in a German mine he was lucky enough not to be detected by the authorities. But in July 1915 the German draft board apprehended him and sent him to the Austrian army. One year later, his family was sent back to the native village of Joseph’s father.

The war years were full of deprivations. Nearly everything was rationed. Now the Buttinger family experienced desperate poverty. Joseph described that time as particularly hard. The family had barely enough to eat and insufficient clothing and shoes for the children only in wintertime. They also did not have enough money for Christmas or birthday presents. In Austria, the Buttingers had to make ends meet in

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10 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 10.
11 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 25.
13 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 21.
much worse living conditions than in Germany. Before the war, the mining company Anton Buttinger worked for provided them with a flat comprising three bedrooms, a kitchen, and a toilet. The house even contained a hand-operated washing machine.¹⁵ In Waldzell in Upper Austria, however, the Buttingers were crowded together in a simple single room apartment in a small building extension of an old farm.¹⁶

In 1916, Anton Buttinger was wounded on the Italian front. Lousy medical care and undernourishment led to his death in March 1917 in a military asylum in Linz.¹⁷ During these desperate years, young Joseph, for the first time, felt deep anger with the political system. He later observed that he recognized at that point that “for poor people the fatherland often is the real enemy”.¹⁸

The loss of the only wage earner worsened the family’s deprivation. There were many days when the members of the family had nothing to eat. The Buttingers, like many other Austrians in the last year of the war, experienced disastrous food shortages. The population was particularly affected by the cut in the flour ration, caused by peace expectations following the talks of Brest-Litovsk.¹⁹ The small widow’s pension of Mrs. Buttinger did not suffice to feed all of the family’s mouths. The Buttinger children had to beg in the neighborhood. Years later, Buttinger described street begging as a deeply shaming experience. According to historian Ernst Hanisch, begging was a common institution and not unusual for poor agricultural laborers at that time. According to Hanisch, children begging rather appeal to the “maternal duty of wealthier farmers’ wives”.²⁰

Joseph’s childhood was characterized by his strictly conservative catholic surroundings and he began to develop enthusiasm for the church. He served as an altarboy whenever it was possible. Besides the small compensation altarboys could earn for their services, there was another incentive for him. It was the only escape from the monotonous daily life characterized by hard physical work, no access to consumer goods, a rigid hierarchical social structure, and last but not least strict social control by the village community and the church.²¹ During his entire four years in rural Waldzell,

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¹⁵ Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 19.
¹⁶ Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 24.
¹⁷ Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 26; Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 28.
¹⁸ Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 29.
²⁰ Hanisch, Österreichische Geschichte, p. 97.
²¹ Hanisch, Österreichische Geschichte, p. 93.
young Joseph never experienced the pleasure to read a book or to watch a stage play or a concert apart from listening to organ music in the church.22

When he turned 13, he started a job as an agricultural servant on a local farm23, which was common on the countryside.24 Now at least his worries about food came to an end. But new problems emerged. He described unspeakable working conditions. Corporal punishment still was regularly administered in rural Austria. It even was accepted as the rule in the official regulations for the treatment of agricultural servants, the so-called Dienstbotenordnungen.25 After a while, Buttinger developed neurotical symptoms (bedwetting, winking)26 showing the enormous stress the teenager was under. Moreover, three month before his 13th birthday he had to drop out school against his will.27

**First Contact with the Social Democratic Movement**

Although he lived in a strictly conservative catholic rural environment, he came in to contact with the ideas of the Socialist party. At the turn of the century, voters in the countryside tended entirely to be in favor of the conservative Christian Social party. The leftist Social Democrats usually gained about 12% of the rural vote.28 The revolutionary mood at the End of World War I was characterized by Social Democratic attempts to strengthen their political influence by mobilizing masses.29 In the countryside they began to organize conservative agricultural workers with some success. In Waldzell, young religious conservative Joseph not only witnessed two of these organizational attempts but also recognized the unjust violent reaction Social Democratic activists were facing from rural landowning conservatives.30 He began to sympathize with the ideas of the Social Democrats. In his memoires, he described a demonstration the Social Democrats organized in Waldzell in January 1921. This became a turning point in his life. He began to realize “to where he belongs”.31

22 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 62.
24 Hanisch, Österreichische Geschichte, p. 97.
26 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 54.
30 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 60.
31 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 61.
The Buttinger family was fortunate to escape the economic and mental dead-end of their situation in Waldzell. Negotiated through a wealthy influential relative, the Buttingers got the chance to move to the industrial village of Schneegattern a few miles away from Waldzell. Joseph arrived there on February 2, 1921. In Schneegattern everything was different. While conservative catholic farmers dominated Waldzell, Schneegattern was dominated by a huge Social Democratic anticlerical population (about 90% of all residents). Wages still were not very high, but people had the chance to experience a new life with new and unknown possibilities. 15 years old Joseph there read his first book, browsed through his first newspaper, and ate his first orange.

Buttinger and his older half-brother Anton found a job in a factory that produced glassware. Apart from encountering new treasures (books, fruits) Buttinger in Schneegattern experienced a further achievement of a modern society – regular working hours. In contrast to his former work as rural servant when he labored regularly through 16 hour-workdays, he now had a 48 hours workweek in the glass factory, introduced by the Socialist led post war government two years earlier. This 8-hour workday, together with the free access to information and education in the workers’ library, allowed the studious adolescent to acquire more and more knowledge. Buttinger soon found a new home within the Social Democratic party organizations. Besides his studies, Buttinger’s leisure time was characterized by activities organized by the party. Soon after his arrival in the new workers’ environment, young Joseph joined several leftist party organizations such as the Naturfreunde who regularly organized hiking tours and lectures about geography and life in other countries. He also became a member of the Social Democratic party and of the trade union for glassworkers. In his memoires he wrote, that he “always will be grateful for the possibilities the party, the labor union, and the workers’ cultural associations offered him.”

A year or so after the beginning of his new life as a worker in Schneegattern, the former religious adolescent turned away from the Catholic Church. According to his new socialist perspective, he considered the Roman Catholic Church not only as a false faith (like most Social Democrats at that time), but also as a means “to enslave the poor and

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32 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 59.
33 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 27.
35 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 85.
36 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 86.
sweated population.” Yet he engaged himself in studying the history of religion along with political history, philosophy and psychology.

In February 1922, not quite 16 years old, Buttinger was elected chair of a local group of the Socialistic Workers Youth. Since alcoholism was a huge problem in the Austrian working class, Buttinger, driven by the Socialist ideology, decided to do something about it. He founded a local group of the socialistic workers abstinence association, the so-called Arbeiter Abstinezverein. According to contemporary social researcher Marie Jahoda, who knew him well, Buttinger’s excellent organizing skills made him widely accepted within the local party circles. He soon started giving talks to socialistic youth organizations throughout his home district of Wels.

Buttinger’s financial and personal situation improved steadily. In 1923, he even managed to afford a pleasure trip to Italy, something the average working class Austrian could not do until the beginning of the “Wirtschaftswunder“ (economic miracle) in the 1950’s.

In December 1924 his financial situation worsened as a result of his company’s closing due to the post war years’ economic downturn. The decommissioning of the factory affected the entire industrial village. Almost the whole population of Schneegattern lost their jobs. As a consequence, many workers left the village. Among them were Joseph’s half-brother Anton as well as his stepfather, the man his mother had married shortly after the family arrived in Schneegattern. The eighteen-year-old Buttinger decided to stay in his village although it was impossible for him to find a job. He now profited from the newly created public unemployment insurance the Austrian postwar government had introduced two years before. Buttinger’s next two years were characterized by intensive self-studies and participation in several Socialist Party

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37 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 80, 91.
38 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 27.
40 Many socialist believed, alcoholism, like religion was a means of the capitalists to enslave the working class.
42 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 92.
events. Shortly after he became unemployed, he began learning English although no one in his village was able to teach him or even to speak English with him. It is very unlikely that he intended to emigrate to the United States or Great Britain at that point. He did not mention such intentions in his memoirs. His English studies rather were part of a self-driven personal general education program that also included the disciplines of economics, natural history, and philosophy.\footnote{Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 102.} He even mentioned in his memoirs that, for a long time, he had prejudices towards “the quality of American literature.”\footnote{Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 117.} Buttinger most certainly also was influenced by a common leftist view characterizing the United States of America as a capitalistic, unsocial country.\footnote{Günter Bischof, “Two Sides of the Coin: The Americanization of Austria and Austrian Anti-Americanism,” in: Alexander Stephan, ed., The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945 (New York: Berghan Books, 2006), p.147-184 (citation p. 167).}

**Buttinger’s Political Career**

A further turning point in Buttinger’s life took place in April 1926 when he found employment in a small glassware factory in the upper Austrian city of Wels. Unlike the villages of Schneegatten or Waldzell with about 1.000 inhabitants, Wels was one of the biggest towns in Upper Austria. A 1923 census pointed to a total population of 24.248.\footnote{Statistik Austria, „Ein Blick auf die Gemeinde Wels,“ in statistik.at, 2010, <http://www.statistik.at/blickgem/blick1/g40301.pdf> (accessed 15 Apr. 2010).}

A few weeks after his arrival, he was elected into his first important political position. Hardly 20 years old, he became chairman of the social democratic party for the political district of Wels.\footnote{Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 106.} He now came into contact with the leaders of the party as well as with socialist intellectuals who supported him with books and advice to continue his autodidactic studies.

The closing of the factory two month after he started to work did not really affect him too much this time because his party friends had already organized a job for him in the administration of Upper Austria’s provincial capital of Linz. One month before he started his new job, he got the chance to participate in a workshop in Vienna about the principles of socialist education. Already in the first week of his stay, he attracted the attention of the course organizer who offered him a job as manager and educator in a
social democratic youth center in Carinthia, in the south of Austria, starting in September 1926.51

He remained in that position for four years until January 1930. That time period was among the happiest of his life. He had the possibility of making enormous progresses in his self-studies thanks to an abundant workers library and his contacts to many educated socialists in his new residence city of St.Veit/Glan or the nearby provincial capital of Klagenfurt.52 In 1928, he did a pleasure trip to Paris and London. For the first time, he heard English spoken by a native. This was a shock for him. For he never heard how the words were pronounced, he hardly understood a single sentence.53 During the last year of his time in Carinthia, he decided to write a book “combining the whole knowledge of his studies.”54 Vom Urnebel zum Zukunftsstaat (from the primeval fog to the state of the future) was characterized by “frightening dogmatism and intellectual arrogance” as Buttinger himself stated years later.55 Nonetheless, the book attracted attention among higher party officials in Vienna. In 1930 he became secretary of the Social Democratic Party in the district of St.Veit/Glan.56

Before he started in St.Veit, he was sent to the social democratic Arbeiterhochschule, an intensive political preparation course. The course was held in the city of Vienna and lasted for 6 months. Its founding can be seen as a short lasting (1926 to 1933) party attempt to create an alternative education track for future party elites.57 The course level corresponded with the level of a sophisticated secondary school.58 Among his fellow students were future party leaders such as Franz Jonas (a later president of Austria’s Second Republic).59 Buttinger came out of the school with “enormous self-confidence and high-flying political ambitions”60 and was willing to address the problems and tasks of his party position. By the time Buttinger entered his new position, Austrian social democrats (or democracy generally speaking) faced huge problems. The economic crisis unleashed by black Friday in New York influenced not only the economic situation of the entire

51 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 107.
52 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 115.
53 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 128.
55 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 118.
56 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 28.
58 Stimmer, Eliten in Österreich, p. 628.
59 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 132.
60 Jahoda, Lebenserinnerungen, p. 53.
country, but had also huge negative effects on its political climate. Austria’s conservative and right wing parties more and more embarked on an anti-democratic course in order to save their position of power. They began to use the apparatus of state against their opponents. Unpopular budget restoration actions as well as the bankruptcy of the biggest Austrian bank led to an increasing influx of voters to the opposition parties. There were not only Social Democrats who gained more votes. The newly emerged Nazi movement became stronger and stronger in those years. In April 1933, provincial elections in Vienna, Lower Austria and Salzburg had shown that about a third of the former Christian-Social Party voters had gone National Socialist. The former Austrian Socialist emigrant Adolf Sturmthal described the situation as extremely critical. Each of the three bigger parties fought “a war of life and death.” Buttinger and his party members saw the new movement as much more dangerously for Austrian democracy than the conservatives who turned increasingly undemocratic. In these difficult times, when his party literally and physically was “fighting” a war on two frontiers, Buttinger constantly tried to gain more and more voters in his district. Ambitiously, he started to reorganize the party apparatus and to find talented people representing the Social Democrats in the particular villages.

But the years from 1930 to the outlawing of his party in 1934 above all were characterized by his war against “Nazism”. In his memoirs, he described that he used “all his power and his political knowledge to expose the real nature of the movement.” In the summer of 1933 he had saved enough money to do a further pleasure trip. He decided to go to France for several weeks to “improve his French,” as he wrote in his memoirs. Based on the critical political situation in Austria as well as on the election of the NSDAP in Germany on January 30, one might assume that the trip was not all pleasure. Maybe Buttinger, who was neither welcomed by the Nazi party nor by the

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62 Talos, Manoschek, „Konstituierungsprozess”, p. 37.
64 Talos, „Herrschaftssystem“, p. 275.
65 Buttinger, Twilight of Socialism, p. 3.
67 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 142.
68 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 143.
69 Buttinger, Ortswechsel, p. 149.
conservative Christian Social Party, had an inking of what might happen in the following years and began to consider emergency emigration plans. In his memoirs, he also mentioned that he had started to prepare himself and some of his colleagues for the “expected illegality.”\(^70\) He spent four months in St.Rémy Les Chevreuse, a small village close to Paris, where he made contact with the socialist family Coissac. In 1938, when he was forced to emigrate, he profited from these months and his relationship to the French family, even though, at that time, he already was financially secure through his relationship to his later wife Muriel “Mary” Gardiner.\(^71\)

**The Road into the “Illegality”**

On March 4, 1933, a few months beforeButtinger’s trip to France, the Christian Social chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß used discordances in parliament to dissolve it. That step de facto dismantled democracy in the Austrian republic.\(^72\) On a party congress shortly afterwards, Buttinger found himself among the most vehement critics of the party leadership’s decision not to intervene.\(^73\) “One of the most important failures of the party before its dissolution was the lacking preparation for its illegal work,” he later wrote in an expose.\(^74\) The Austrian government used the period from 1933 to 1934 to transform the former Republic into a fascist one-party state. In May 1933 the fast growing Nazi party was outlawed after launching a couple of assaults. At the same time Austria’s chancellor Dollfuss successively began to dismantle the Social Democratic party structures. On May 31, the *Republikanische Schutzbund*, the Socialist party’s militia, was prohibited. Soon afterwards, the government banned the traditional May ceremonies, and weakened the party’s position in different important state institutions (social insurance, etc.).\(^75\)

Buttinger, in his position as party secretary of St.Veit/Glan, prepared himself for an “emerging civil war.”\(^76\) He tried to convince the party leaders of the necessity of a strong-armed resistance, worked meticulously on plans for harassments in his home

\(^71\) Jahoda, *Lebenserinnerungen*, p. 53.
\(^73\) Buttinger, *Ortswechsel*, p. 149.
\(^74\) Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes [hereafter cited as DÖW] Archive, File Number: 7523, Dokumente und Entwürfe über die Programme und Arbeiten der RSÖ.
\(^75\) Talos and Manoschek, „Konstituierungsprozess“, p. 44.
\(^76\) Buttinger, *Ortswechsel*, p. 152.
district in case of a civil war, and as mentioned before, tried to prepare himself and other party members for partisan activities underground.\textsuperscript{77} Buttinger, who, up until that moment in time, owed everything in his life to the Socialist party, was willing to defend it by all means. His cold-blooded determination was clearly analyzed by Marie Jahoda criticizing his “frightening determination” during the “illegal years” of the party.\textsuperscript{78} But the intentions towards war and peace of the party’s leadership around Otto Bauer differed greatly from Buttinger’s expectations. The main goal of the Social Democrat’s majority was to avoid a military clash between the party militia and governmental troops.\textsuperscript{79} That strategy worked until February 12, 1934, when state troops attacked several party offices in Upper Austria, Styria, and Vienna. This unleashed an intensive but short lasting burst of resistance of local, armed party members.

Interestingly, Buttinger did not participate in these resistance fights. He claimed in his memoirs that he did not get promised munitions in time and therefore decided to hide from the state executive, which “likely would have put him into prison.”\textsuperscript{80} When Buttinger realized that the government did not prosecute lower party functionaries from districts that had not participated in the February fights he left his hiding-place. Now, the party profited from the underground structure he had organized before. He began to print pamphlets critical of the government and even a weekly magazine, and started to paint anti-fascist messages on walls all around his district.\textsuperscript{81} His intensive underground work soon attracted the suspicious country’s government. His flat became increasingly suspect and attracted house searches. Finally, in May 1934, he was thrown into prison for the possession of illegal propaganda material.\textsuperscript{82}

**Underground: Buttinger’s Carrier as One of the Leaders of the Austrian Socialists:**

The local security police kept him in a jail in the city of Villach for more than three months. He only was released because he agreed to leave the state of Carinthia.\textsuperscript{83} He decided to move to the capital city of Austria where the leadership of the illegal

\textsuperscript{77} Buttinger, *Ortswechsel*, pp. 152.
\textsuperscript{78} Jahoda, *Lebenserinnerungen*, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{79} Buttinger, *Twilight of Socialism*, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{80} Buttinger, *Ortswechsel*, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{81} Buttinger, *Ortswechsel*, p. 154.
\textsuperscript{82} Buttinger, *Ortswechsel*, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{83} DÖW Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
socialist party was situated. He arrived in Vienna on August 20, 1934.\textsuperscript{84} Because of the steady arrests of members of the socialist party\textsuperscript{85}, there was an urgent need of devoted activists. Buttinger proved to be a “master of the tactics of conspiracy” managing not to be arrested during this dangerous time working underground in Vienna.\textsuperscript{86} Within short time, he became an important player in the illegal party network. He entered the so-called Zentralkomitee a successor organization of the Socialist Party leadership. One month after his arrival, he became spokesman of the body’s provincial organization. In this position, he tried to change the course of the party. He increasingly became one of the most important inner party critics. In order to save the party’s existence, he demanded a total change of the party’s structures and therefore criticized the leading position of the emigrated party leaders in the Czechoslovakian city of Brno.\textsuperscript{87}

A further wave of arrests, following a secret party conference in December 1934, eliminated nearly the whole managerial level of the Socialist Party.\textsuperscript{88} The lack of leaders favored Buttinger’s further advancement in the party. He and four other party members, who were lucky enough not to be caught by the authorities, took over the orphaned party leadership on February 17, 1935. They began to centralize what remained of the formerly biggest party of Austria\textsuperscript{89}, which once had gained more than two thirds of all Austrian votes.\textsuperscript{90} Along the lines of Buttinger’s former demands, the new management changed the shape of the Socialist Party now called the “Revolutionary Socialists of Austria”. According to Lenin’s principle of a “democratic centralism”, the new members of the Zentralkomitee privileged themselves with dictatorial power.\textsuperscript{91} They also changed the structure of the inner party organization. According to an article describing the new design of the socialistic workers movement, the whole organization was downsized and much more tightly organized.\textsuperscript{92} Buttinger also demanded a much more visible delimitation of the leftist block consisting of the Revolutionary Socialist and the Austrian Communist Party.\textsuperscript{93} Several days after the new leadership seized power, it broke up the


\textsuperscript{86} DÖW Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.

\textsuperscript{87} DÖW Archive, File Number: 7523, Dokumente und Entwürfe über die Programme und Arbeiten der RSÖ.

\textsuperscript{88} Holtmann, \textit{Unterdrückung und Befreiung}, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{89} Holtmann, \textit{Unterdrückung und Befreiung}, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{90} Sturmfhal, \textit{Zwei Leben}, p. 177.

\textsuperscript{91} DÖW Archive, File Number: 7523, Dokumente und Entwürfe über die Programme und Arbeiten der RSÖ.

\textsuperscript{92} DÖW Archive, File Number: 7523, Dokumente und Entwürfe über die Programme und Arbeiten der RSÖ.

\textsuperscript{93} Buttinger, \textit{Am Beispiel Österreichs}, p. 261.
existing confederation with the Communists. This was mainly necessary since the Communists attempted to appear as the only real alternative for leftist voters. His description in one of his letters from that time that he had intensive “contact with the Zentralkomitee of the Communist Party” does not fit the official course of the Revolutionary Socialists of Austria. Both organizations published some mutual political statements, agreed to a mutual action program against the government, and decided to establish “companionable relations.”

His years in the country’s most important socialistic organization brought a significant insight to the successful social climber. Buttinger recognized that it is much easier to criticize from the merging than to rule at the center. “In that time, I experienced numerous really desperate moments,” he later stated. That feeling of desperation as well as his realization that sometimes change is not possible, might be seen as one of the causes for his quick withdrawal from politics after his wealthy wife Muriel Gardiner introduced him to a different life and society with broader possibilities in the United States.

Buttinger and his comrades had to fight on two frontiers. On the one hand they had to fight the political enemy (the fascist government, National Socialists), on the other hand they had to keep the workers mobilized. The latter proofed to be more difficult than expected. Numerous half-hearted protest campaigns showed the workers’ increasing lack of interest in Socialist affairs. From 1935 to 1938, Buttinger in his function as member of the party’s leadership, worked on numerous publishing projects. He issued the Informationsdienst, the Zentralkomitee’s weekly magazine, published numerous fliers and articles in illegal socialist workers journals, and was in charge of the publication of various brochures.

The End of Buttinger’s Life in Austria and His First Connection to the United States:

In February 1934 Buttinger entered the most important position within the Socialist Party. He became a member of a group in charge of the movement’s future

94 Holtmann, Unterdrückung und Befreiung, p. 214.
95 Holtmann, Unterdrückung und Befreiung, p. 208.
96 DÖW Archive, File Number: 7523, Dokumente und Entwürfe über die Programme und Arbeiten der RSÖ.
97 Buttinger, Am Beispiel Österreichs, p. 266.
98 Holtmann, Unterdrückung und Befreiung, p. 205.
99 DÖW Archive, File Number: 7523, Dokumente und Entwürfe über die Programme und Arbeiten der RSÖ.
direction. But his political rise was not necessarily connected to an improvement of his financial situation. That should happen only after he met his later wife Muriel Gardiner. Muriel was born in 1901 as the fourth child of the wealthy Morris family who owned one of the largest butcher shops and meat packing business in Chicago. After earning a bachelor degree from Wellesley College in 1922, she moved to Europe to continue her studies.

One of her trips brought her to Vienna where she became fascinated by the psychoanalysis. She decided to stay there to do such an analysis. In 1926 she married Julian Gardiner, a music student from Great Britain with whom she had one child, her daughter Connie. The marriage was only short lasting and the couple divorced a few years later. While staying in Austria studying medicine, Muriel became involved in Austrian politics. She advanced into an invaluable position of the antifascist Austrian underground, supporting Revolutionary Socialist activists with money and a hiding place when they had to hide from the police.

Gardiner owned a house in the small village of Sulz in the Vienna Woods not far away from the capital city of Vienna. That place became one of the secret meeting places of the illegal Zentralkomitee. At one of these meetings, she met Joseph Buttinger probably in February 1935. Immediately she felt sympathies for him, as she later wrote in her memoirs.

Buttinger at that time still lived a life of poverty full of deprivations. He regularly had to hide out at various different places in order not to be caught by the Austrian police. The relationship to Muriel Gardiner changed his entire life. “Wieser [Joseph Buttinger] had only the clothes he was wearing [....]: a pair of black striped trousers and a thight-fitting brown jacket, obviously city clothes and in any case too small for him,” Gardiner noted in her first impression of her latter husband. His relationship to the wealthy American woman brought important changes to his daily life. She bought him new clothes that were better fitting, and gave him shelter in one of her flats in Vienna as well as in her house in Sulz. Buttinger, being accustomed to poverty and deprivations, experienced a bit of life he never had known before– and he really began to enjoy it.

100 Gardiner, Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 10.
101 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 18.
103 Gardiner, “Mary”, p. 71.
In the summer of 1935 the couple was planning their first vacation in London, where Muriel introduced him to her stepfather Francis Nelson, formerly a member of the British parliament. Back in Vienna, she began to introduce him to her American and British academic friends. In the summers of 1936 and 1937, she took him along with a group of American academics to the Salzburg music festival. Buttinger enjoyed each single moment of these trips. He was fascinated by the friends of his American girlfriend and immediately settled down in this new life with intelligent well-traveled people, summer trips to Salzburg and winter journeys to the Swiss ski resort of Arosa.

In the end of 1937, the persecution of the Socialists by the Austrian government reached a final climax before the Anschluss. After month of detailed preparation, the police launched a massive strike against the party’s leadership. Within three days following November 27, the police arrested about 40 top-class functionaries. Buttinger was abroad at that time and was lucky to escape the police. With only a few top functionaries at large, the work of the party’s leadership was reduced to wasting game in hiding. In that critical situation, Buttinger and his latter wife saw the handwriting on the wall and decided to leave the country for a while. Muriel rented a room in a beautiful hotel situated in the snow-covered hills of Arosa.

In early 1938 German pressure on Austria increased further. The German Führer Hitler summoned Austria’s chancellor Schuschnig to a meeting on February 11, 1938, dictating him numerous demands. One of these was an amnesty for imprisoned National Socialists. Schuschnig answered with the release of all political prisoners, not only National Socialists but also Social Democrats. A few days later, Buttinger returned to Austria. “Vienna was seething with uncertainty and unrest” Muriel Gardiner later wrote. It was clear for Buttinger that the National Socialistic German Reich soon would annex Austria. He spent his next weeks convincing his colleagues to emigrate immediately. Through numerous reports of their German party friends, Austrian Socialists knew very well what they had to expect in the case of the “Anschluss”. The expected hopelessness of the Socialists’ situation in Austria following the “Anschluss”,

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104 Gardiner, “Mary”, p. 75.
105 Gardiner, “Mary”, p. 79.
106 Holtmann, Unterdrückung und Befreiung, p. 265.
107 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 68.
109 Gardiner, “Mary”, p. 84.
another change in Buttinger’s political carrier. He now took the view that the illegal Socialist Party, with its paved down structures, had no chance fighting an underground war against the well-organized Secret State Police known as the Gestapo. He therefore advocated a complete dissolution of the party in Austria.\textsuperscript{111} In one of his later books he compared the party after the annexation to an “obsolete, embattled warship unfit for action.”\textsuperscript{112}

**In Exile: The Stateless Refugee Buttinger:**

The expectation that the German Reich will annex Austria became clear even to the greatest skeptics by early March. Already before the official “Anschluss”, illegal Austrian National Socialists took over local authorities in many important cities such as Graz, Linz, and Innsbruck on March 11.\textsuperscript{113}

Masked as a British vacationer planning a ski holiday in Switzerland, Buttinger left Vienna the next morning. Muriel Gardiner’s young daughter Connie and one of her British friends accompanied him emphasizing his camouflage.\textsuperscript{114} Muriel herself remained in Austria for some further months finishing her medical studies. It was a time when she, recognizing the hopeless situation of many of her Austrian friends, began to help numerous people leaving the country.

Buttinger meanwhile went to Paris, where most of the emigrated Austrian Socialists lived for the time being. As soon as he arrived in Paris, he became entrapped in the various inner party struggles about the future direction of the Austrian Socialist movement. Shortly after his arrival in April 1938, he was elected chairman of the Foreign Board of the Austrian Socialists and one of the editors of the socialists’ emigration magazine *Der sozialistische Kampf* (The Socialistic Struggle).\textsuperscript{115} In this leading position, he faced the challenge of settling numerous daily disputes between the divided party functionaries.\textsuperscript{116} He increasingly became unhappy with the situation. “Joe was worried and often gloomy, not the cheerful, active, even-tempered person I had

\textsuperscript{111} Buttinger, *Am Beispiel Österreichs*, p. 543.
\textsuperscript{112} Buttinger, *Am Beispiel Österreichs*, p. 543.
\textsuperscript{113} Carsten, *Faschismus*, p.294.
\textsuperscript{114} Gardiner and Buttinger, *nicht vergessen*, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{115} DÖW Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
\textsuperscript{116} For interesting insights concerning Buttinger’s occupation during that time see: DÖW, File Number: 7601, Auslandsvertretung der österreichischen Sozialisten, Paris.
known in Austria,” Muriel Gardiner later remembered. In one of his letters he wrote in 1942, Buttinger offered some insight in to his thoughts of that time. He argued that he never really had wanted the founding of the Foreign Board, and that he did not believe in the success of the “old social-democratic policy.” In fact one can assume that during that time, Buttinger already embarked on pursuing other targets. All evidence suggests that he did not want to be involved in the Socialist emigration and policy any longer. In one of his letters, he even stated that he had recognized he did not see “further use of his time and his energy within the Socialist Party”. He realized that he had to change his life in order to achieve success in other fields. Muriel shared his opinion and tried to convince him of a better use of his time and his capabilities.

Shortly, after Muriel arrived in Paris, he proposed marriage to her. It probably did not entirely come out of a spontaneous feeling of love. Both, Muriel and Joseph never really believed in the importance of marriage as a legitimated life partnership. In the end, both agreed to enter the marriage because of easing their life situation. Buttinger had given up his Austrian citizenship shortly after his arrival in Paris. Now he was a stateless person. At that time, he most likely envisioned the “new continent” for a better future. One might gather how well prepared Buttinger was for his new life in America when reading one of his letters. Only two weeks after his arrival in New York, he noted that he was immediately absolutely familiar with the multi cultural metropolis of the city of New York and his social interaction with Americans.

The biggest problem for people wanting to leave Europe for the United States was getting an immigration visa. Most European immigrants discovered at that hard way that the stereotype of America as the country where everything is fast and efficient, is not true. Since a 1921 Congressional Quota Act, all persons intending to immigrate to the States had to organize a so-called affidavit of support guarantying the authorities that the would be immigrant to the United States had a person taking care of them in

117 Gardiner, “Mary”, p. 132.
118 DÖW Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
119 DÖW Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
120 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 116.
121 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 117.
122 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 118.
123 DÖW Archive, File Number: 7824, Briefe J. Buttinger, N.Y. 1939-1940.
124 Sturmthal, Zwei Leben, p. 163.
125 Sturmthal, Zwei Leben, p. 167.
case of neediness. In addition, their immigration efforts had to match a very restrictive quota system. The 1921 Quota Act, passed by Congress, placed ceilings on the number of immigrants admitted from each country. The quota for Austria, counted as part of the Eastern Europe quota, was set at 7,442 immigrants to the United States per year. In May 1924, the Johnson-Reed Act limited the total European immigration to 150,000 per year, and reduced each nations quota to two percent of the population that had entered the United States in 1890. In the census of 1890, significantly fewer Southern and Eastern Europeans were recorded than in the 1920’s when the law was passed. This effectively reduced immigration from these regions while making more room for immigration from Western Europe. As a result of the 1924 quota restrictions, immigration from Austria was limited to a meager 785 persons per year. Although these quota limits were not very high, interestingly neither gross nor net immigration even got close to them during the 1930’s. Yet American nativism provoked numerous fears of masses of immigrants flooding the American homeland. Therefore the president and most members of Congress were averse to accept high numbers of necessary immigrants from areas of Europe where the situation was precarious for many people. Therefore “nothing much was done” in the United States to make the immigration process easier and more uncomplicated in order to save tens of thousands of refugees in Europe. Only after the fall of France, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the State Department, pressured by numerous human rights activists (including Joseph Buttinger), reluctantly issued 3,268 emergency visas to “those of superior intellectual attainment, of indomitable spirit, experienced in vigorous support of the principles of liberal government and who are in danger of persecution or death at the hands of autocracy.” But here again, the slow bureaucratic authorization process only resulted in about a third of them being invited.

131 Daniels, Coming to America, p. 301.
132 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 154.
133 Daniels, Coming to America, p. 301.
134 Daniels, Coming to America, p. 301.
Being married with an American citizen, Joe as Joseph soon was called, intended to get a special visa and the permission to enter the States without being hindered by the restrictions of the quota system and the bureaucratic formalities preceding an application.135

Joe and his future wife had to wait about one year to get permission for a marriage from the French authorities. During that time, the couple faced numerous bureaucratic hurdles. Muriel even travelled to New York, spending a lot of time with her family’s lawyer in order to find other ways to get Joe into her country. But all other possibilities apart from a marriage in France proved to be impossible.136 Through the mediation of the former Socialist French Prime Minister Léon Blum, Buttinger finally got the required documents and the Buttingers got married on August 1, 1939.137

Besides his activity on the Socialists’ Foreign Board, he learned more about the activities Muriel was pursuing. After she returned from Vienna, she continued her efforts to help needy Austrians to leave their country now a province in the National Socialistic German Reich.138

Buttinger thus came to his future field of occupation aiding refugees due to two reasons. One was the paragon of his wife who began to support refugees as early as 1938.139

Joseph started his new pursuit soon after his arrival in America in 1940.140 The second important reason for Buttinger’s turn towards the international aid was his own experience in a French internment camp.141 As a so-called “enemy alien” he, like many other Austrian and German immigrants who fled from Nazism, was interned for many weeks after the outbreak of World War II. He described the conditions in these internment cages as absolutely unbearable. The internees were jammed together on a wet meadow in tents insufficient to protect them from wetness or coldness.142 Muriel organized his visa as well as the tickets to the new world and was desperately trying to get him out of prison. But her efforts finally succeeded on October 20, when some of the leaders of the Austrian Socialists were released from these camps.143 Their last weeks in Europe were marked by the couple’s attempts to get one of the rare shipping tickets out

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135 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 131.
136 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 133.
137 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 133.
139 Gardiner, “Mary”, pp. 86.
140 DÖW Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
141 DÖW Archive, File Number: 7824, Briefe J. Buttingers, New York, 1939-1940.
142 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 151.
143 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 144.
of a continent during the initial phase of its most horrible war. After many complications and delays, the Buttingers finally embarked the S.S. Manhattan on a transatlantic journey in early November 1939.\textsuperscript{144} Buttinger quickly put Europe and its miseries behind him.

**A New American Citizen:**

Buttinger came to the United States very well prepared for his new life. His long relationship with his American partner had introduced him to many of her friends and he learned how to deal with his future compatriots. Muriel rented a spacious flat in New York on Central Park West, which also doubled for temporary lodging for needy new refugees. During that time, the Buttingers also accommodated important guests such as the Austrian Socialist leaders Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler.\textsuperscript{145}

Buttinger fitted well the image of the typical Austrian and German immigrant who came to America during the early years of the Second World War. This cohort consisted mainly of well-educated people who integrated quickly in to their new homeland. Compared to their size, these people contributed disproportionately to the American society and culture.\textsuperscript{146} A Bureau of the Census statistical abstract of the year 1940 shows that out of 70,794 people of age 16 or above coming to the United States in 1939, only 9,137 were unskilled workers.\textsuperscript{147} The rest were specialized professionals with great skills. It is often forgotten that these refugees from Hitler’s Europe in most cases took their life’s savings with them. In the year 1939, 24,954 persons (ca. 35 percent of all immigrants) came to the United States with more than 1,000 Dollars in their pockets.\textsuperscript{148} That meant that these people brought at least the total of 25 Million Dollars with them.

Shortly after Buttinger’s arrival in his new homeland, he made an important step to show his Austrian compatriots that he has finished with his engagement in the Socialist Party. He resigned his position as chairman of the Foreign Board of the Austrian

\textsuperscript{144} DÖW Archive, File Number: 7824, Briefe J. Buttingers, New York, 1939-1940.
\textsuperscript{145} Gardiner and Buttinger, *nicht vergessen*, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{146} Daniels, *Coming to America*, p. 301.
Socialists. Two years later, he even quit his membership in the Socialist Party.

Buttinger’s ambitions soon emerged. He was fascinated by the new and unknown possibilities offered a dynamic person like him in the United States. He planned to become a part of this fascinating new world as soon as possible. The enthusiastic language of his first letters to his friends in Europe offers some interesting insights into his first impressions. "It is a great pleasure to speak with these people [Americans] about our [his and his wife’s] and your [the Austrian Socialists] worries”, an enthusiastic Joe Buttinger wrote to friends in Europe only two weeks after his arrival. He added: “These kind of relations to Americans are much more important to me than everything else. I certainly will not waste my time for different kind of immigrant groups.” He also enthused about New York as a “great city that exceeds all imagination”.

In his first activity after his arrival on November 15, 1940 he launched a massive public attack against the unbearable conditions in French internment camps where a lot of German and Austrian Antifascists still suffered imprisonment. To achieve his goals, he began to establish relations to major newspaper such as the “Jewish Daily Forward,” “The New York Times,” and the weekly magazine “The Nation.” The latter printed his first article concerning French internment camps, after “The New York Times” had rejected his test.

Muriel and Joe also tried to promote their cause with different influential persons. They, for example built excellent contacts with the president of the University of Chicago who was a good friend of President Roosevelt. Later, they invited the first lady to their flat in New York to discuss the bureaucratic methods of visa authorization. Buttinger also started to give public lectures about the situation in Europe. His first presentation was organized by the “League of Industrial Democracy” and took place on January 7, 1940 about two months after his arrival in the United States. While Buttinger tried to help needy persons from Austria and Europe he did not want to join the emigrants’ organizations, as he wrote in one of his letters. He turned down

149 DÖW Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
150 DÖW Archive, File Number: 7824, Briefe J. Buttingers, New York, 1939-1940.
151 DÖW Archive, File Number: 7824, Briefe J. Buttingers, New York, 1939-1940.
152 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 152.
154 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 152.
155 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 152.
156 DÖW Archive, File Number: 7824, Briefe J. Buttingers, New York, 1939-1940.
numerous requests by his emigrated Austrian compatriots to join their organizations. But he frequently became a member of and participated in American clubs and societies. In January 1940, he joined an American aid organization, the International Relief Organization now known under the acronym “IRC” (International Relief Commitee). He, after the occupation of France, together with numerous influential Americans, founded the “Emergency Rescue Commitee”. Its goal was to rescue as many refugees as possible out of Southern France. He later wrote that he got support especially from Jewish Organizations as well as the first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Once these organizations succeeded in bringing refugees out of Europe, his wife Muriel played an important role in helping them launch a new existence in the United States. She rented twenty flats and several single rooms in New York to offer lodging to the arrivals. She also supported most of them with interest free loans as well as presents.

The Buttingers spent most of their time organizing visa for the displaced Europeans. Especially Muriel wrote hundreds of letters to “all sorts of people,” persuading them to write affidavits of support for refugees. Such affidavits implied financial guaranties from the sponsors. The Buttingers received many rejections to their pleas for help. Muriel therefore offered her compatriots a guarantee from her lawyer assuring that she personally will be liable for all costs a refugee might cause.

The new “American” Joe Buttinger found his second life task in the organization of refugee aid. He embarked on his new occupation with the same enthusiasm that he had formerly devoted to the Socialist Party in Austria. After World War II, the situation in Europe was catastrophically. Millions of people were dead, wounded, or displaced by the war. Millions houses were destroyed. After 69 months of war, the infrastructure of the European economy collapsed. On October 3, 1945, the “IRC” dispatched Buttinger to Europe to support needy persons especially Anti-fascists having spent years in concentration camps. During that time, he rose to the position of the European Director of the IRC in charge of organizing aid deliveries to the countries of France, Italy,

157 See: DÖW Archive, File Number: 7893, Briefe aus der Emigration der österreichischen Sozialisten.
158 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 152.
160 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 153.
161 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 154.
162 DÖW Archive, File Number: 18886/2, Buttinger Material (USA/Schweden).
164 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 159.
Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium, Holland, and Turkey. At the end of 1945, the Buttingers launched an important project with their own money. They began to send “care packages” to needy people in France, Germany, and Austria. The project lasted until 1950 and brought thousands of American care packages to Europe.

When the situation in Western Europe improved in the 1950’s, the “IRC” made Buttinger responsible for other danger zones. In 1956 and 1957, he became in charge of the aid coordination for Hungarian refugees after the Hungarian Crisis. Like in the years before, the Buttingers generously supported numerous people not only with official “IRC” financial support but also out of their own pocket. Joe Buttinger used his numerous contacts to his former party comrades to convince the Austrian government “to open fully the door for the refugees of the Hungarian Revolution”, as Andreas H. Pongany, President of the World Federation of Hungarian Freedom Fighters later stated.

In 1953 he published his first ambitious history book “In the Twilight of Socialism” analyzing the History of the revolutionary Socialists during the era of Austro Fascism. In 1954 the “IRC” sent him to Vietnam for two months to build up a relief agency for refugees from the Communist northern part of the divided country. Working with many refugees that had an intellectual background, he immersed himself in the history, culture and politics of Vietnam. He formed the organization American Friends of Vietnam and became a personal friend and one of the first American supporters of Ngo Dinh Diem the later president of South Vietnam. Later, disillusioned with Diem’s dictatorial regime and American Vietnam policies after 1965, he resigned from the Vietnam organization he had founded. In 1958, he published “The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam” a history of Vietnam. In 1967, 1972, and 1977 three mere books on Vietnamese history followed. Encyclopedia Britannica

165 DÖZ Archive, File Number: 18904/3, Buttinger Materialien.
166 Gardiner and Buttinger, nicht vergessen, p. 162.
167 DÖZ Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
168 DÖZ Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
169 DÖZ Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
170 DÖZ Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
commissioned him to write a history of Vietnam for its 15th volume. This made him a respected expert in Vietnamese history. He collected an important library including 7,000 books concerning the history of the country, which he later donated to the Harvard University.174

As early as the 1940's, the former Austrian agricultural servant Joseph Buttinger was fully integrated in American society. He gave numerous presentations in American Universities, wrote books and articles on Vietnam for American audiences, and helped refugees in Europe and Asia in the name of American relief agencies. The Buttingers did not do their annual ski holiday in the snow covered Austrian or Swiss Alps any longer. They went to the American Ski Eldorado of Aspen Colorado.175 By the 1950’s Joseph Buttinger, the Austrian Socialist Leader, had transformed into Joe Buttinger the American “Vietnam Scholar”176.

Conclusion:

Joseph Buttinger's life trajectory took him from a small rural village in interwar Austria to wealthy New York, one of the world’s greatest metropolises. He was from a poor background and he lacked formal education beyond the sixth grade. His means to break away from the rural environment with little hope was a strong will. On the one hand, Buttinger set himself ambitious targets in life. On the other hand he had the discipline to pursue these targets successfully. He learned quickly that a good education is a key to success. He always was willing to extend his knowledge. Because of his lack of financial means he never had the opportunity to finish secondary education. But he was eager for knowledge and learned studiously as an autodidact. His educational efforts were so successful that he later became the premier American expert on Vietnam, writing memoranda even for the White House.

For Buttinger nationalism or patriotism did not count much. He was the type of a modern cosmopolitan, not bound to a single state or nation. He lived for his ambitions not for a state or a homeland. Given these cosmopolitan attitudes, his move to America

174 DÖW Archive, File Number: 2761, Erlebnisbericht und Lebenslauf des österreichischen Historikers Josef Buttinger.
175 DÖW Archive, File Number: 18904/6, Buttinger Materialien.
was not a difficult step for him. He might have done it without being forced to by the war. During his whole life he was on the run. In his childhood, he went from Bavaria to the Rhineland, and than to Upper Austria. Later he moved to Carinthia and than to Vienna. The “Anschluss” forced him to leave Vienna for Paris. From there he finally moved to his final refuge, the United States. In Europe Buttinger, never lived in a place for a longer period of time. His restless life out of poverty led him towards cosmopolitanism.

He was fortunate to meet Muriel Gardiner. She made his rapid integration in the American society possible. She supported him financially, gave him shelter, introduced him to a lot of influential Americans, helped financing his different projects and organized visa to escape Hitler’s Europe.

Buttinger quickly found his new life trajectory in America. As a young socialist, America, or even emigration was not on his radar because he could achieve his first task in Austria. He, very early, went on different pleasure and study trips to Italy, France, and Great Britain in order to experience a world beyond his native country. After his steep career in the Socialist Party, he launched a new start in the United States. He discontinued his work in the Socialist Party. He felt it restricted him from achieving new goals. From the very beginning, he intended to be seen as an American in America not a foreigner. He rejected all demands of his former party comrades to join one of the numerous emigrant organizations. He preferred entering American organizations. Another thesis of this paper is that Buttinger saw himself as an American as soon as he entered the United States. His numerous letters to his Austrian friends bear witness to that.

His marriage to Muriel Gardiner made his naturalization easy. Buttinger’s immigration was a rare case of a European wartime refugee who relatively got easy entry in to the United States. Less prominent refugees had more difficulties getting visas for America.177 He faced his biggest challenge in France when he waited nearly one year for an official permission to marry Muriel Gardiner. As soon as he was married, he received his entrance visa to the States.

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