



"... day in day out, with nothing to do"

Marienthal: an unemployed community

1/16 The Factory

The village is as monotonous as the surrounding district.

Marienthal. *The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*, 1933

Strictly speaking, "Marienthal" is not a place, but the name of a factory and its appertaining workers' settlement in Gramatneusiedl, south of Vienna.

In 1830, banker Hermann Todesco buys a shut-down factory to open *the k.k. priv. Marienthaler Baumwoll-Gespinnst und Woll-Waaren-Manufactur-Fabrik* – a textile mill. Within five years, the mill employs 286 workers, most of whom are initially recruited from the area, but increasingly come from Bohemia and Moravia.

In 1906, the *Social Democratic Workers' Party* (SDAP) opens a local branch on the initiative of two textile workers. In 1907, the SDAP takes 73 percent in the Imperial Council's first elections held on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage.

2/16 The Factory

In the years immediately after the First World War, the factory loses sales markets and suffers from a shortage of raw materials.

In 1929, the Marienthal factory reaches its highest-ever number of employees (90) and workers (1,200), only to be hit by the economic crisis with a vengeance: the spinning mill is shut down, followed by the weaving mill, and by the entire factory on 12th of February, 1930.

Silence has come to the factory. Somewhere across the empty courtyards one can hear at times the thud of a hammer knocking old bricks out of a wall. That is the last job the factory has to offer.

Marienthal. *The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*, 1933

3/16 Life at Marienthal

In the second half of the 19th century, the Marienthal workers' settlement comprises 23 houses with approximately 500 apartment units. The *Consum-Verein Marienthal* grocery store opens in 1864, with food prices up to 25 percent lower than in other shops in the area.

In 1866, a factory inn is built, which is later joined by a dance and theatre hall, plus numerous shops and businesses in the second half of the 19th century.

Before the market crash of 1929, the village of Gramatneusiedl has 1,300 industrial workers and employees, and 160 farmers. A mere five years later, the number of workers in "agriculture and forestry" has risen to 1,294, most of whom are out of work, but muddle through as allotment gardeners or small animal breeders.

The only fairly regular activities of the men of Marienthal are collecting fire-wood, tending their little field allotments for growing vegetables, and, in many cases, looking after their rabbits. [...] The term „unemployed“ applies in the strict sense only to the men, for the women are merely unpaid, not really unemployed. They have the household to run, which fully occupies their day.

Marienthal. The Sociography of an Unemployed Community, 1933

4/16 Politics and Social Life

It is not until 1905 that Marienthal's first trade union is founded. In 1925, the local SDAP branch opens its own club house, where meetings, lectures, theatre performances, concerts, etc. are held.

In 1923 the *Republikanischer Schutzbund* (the SDAP's militia) opens a local branch, with a top membership of approximately 150. After losing the Civil War of 1934, many of its members go underground and join the illegalised *Revolutionäre Sozialisten* (Revolutionary Socialists) or the *Communist Party of Austria*.

1864 sees the erection of a factory hospital, which gets a new building in 1882.

Work in a spinning or weaving mill is not healthy. The dust affects the respiratory tracts and the ear-splitting noise of the machines frays the nerves. People working in such factories are always exposed to the threat of tuberculosis; the doctor stated that in the old days 90 per cent of the Marienthal workers had been potential cases [...]

Marienthal. The Sociography of an Unemployed Community, 1933

5/16 Education

In 1833, Hermann Todesco has a factory school built for "his workers" children.

On the initiative of the SDAP-affiliated organisation *Kinderfreunde* (Childrens' Friends), a Montessori nursery is installed in a former worker's home in 1922. When shut down in 1929, the place is turned into a bachelor home, where young, unmarried unemployed men can stay overnight, which classifies the place as a household and qualifies them for the benefits of social welfare.

In 1924, a group of Marienthal social democrats purchase a timber barrack from a Styrian factory settlement and take it to Marienthal. This *Heim der Kinderfreunde* (Childrens' Friends Home) later also serves as an outpost for the social democratic youth organisations *Rote Falken* and *Verband der sozialistischen Arbeiterjugend*.

The teacher says, "A twelve-year-old pupil of mine has only one pair of shoes; more exactly, he has a few bits of leather sewn together hanging from his feet. When it rains or snows he cannot leave the house. When he is not at school, his father keeps him home so that he will not damage these miserable remains even more by playing in the street."

Marienthal. *The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*, 1933

6/16 Leisure Time

In 1866, the *Dilettanten-Bühne in Marienthal* is founded, a popular workers' theatre and home to the men's choir *Männer-Gesang-Verein „Geselligkeit“ Marienthal*, which still exists today. The theatre has 58 members in 1929 and remains active after the factory is closed, until well into the 1950s.

The *Radfahr-Club „Eintracht“ Marienthal* cycling association is founded in 1889 as one of three workers' cycling clubs, followed by the *Arbeiter-Fußballriege Marienthal* football club in 1908. In 1929, the *Arbeiter-Turn- und Sportverein Marienthal* umbrella organisation holds seven football and three cycling squads, as well as individual squads for apparatus gymnastics, boys' and girls' gymnastics, fistball, "raffball" (a precursor of modern handball), handball, wrestling, weightlifting, cycle ball, and formation cycling, with a total of 325 members.

In one instance this decline in physical resistance became strikingly apparent, and became the subject of heated discussions. The Marienthal wrestlers, accustomed to winning, were unable to field a complete team at the district championship held in the neighboring village. They no longer had a suitable heavyweight, and even in the middleweight showed much poorer general condition than their opponents from other villages.

Marienthal. *The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*, 1933

7/16 The Böhlers

The German couple Karl and Charlotte Bühler move to Vienna in 1922, where they become *the* most influential figures of the *Psychological Institute of the University of Vienna*.

Karl Bühler founds the *Psychological Institute*, one of the world's most modern institutions of the time, and holds a chair of Philosophy and Psychology at the Vienna University until 1938. His wife Charlotte receives a guest professorship in 1929. She has a wide circle of students (including Lotte Schenk-Danzinger), with whom she conducts studies of child and youth behaviour.

After the "Anschluss" Karl Bühler is taken into "preventive custody", but Charlotte manages to have him released, and they emigrate to the United States. They settle in Los Angeles in 1945, where Karl Bühler runs a private practice until his death in 1963. Charlotte Bühler returns to Germany in 1971.

"In a way, this was my end, too. In spite of the many tempests and conflicts we'd been through, our 47 years together had formed such a bond between us that I couldn't bear to contemplate living alone."

Charlotte Bühler, "Selbstdarstellung", 1972

8/16 Austrian Research Unit for Economic Psychology

The Marienthal study is conducted by the *Austrian Research Unit for Economic Psychology* (ÖWF, founded in 1931) and initiated and directed by Karl Bühler's assistant Paul F. Lazarsfeld.

Commissioners of the research unit include well-known businesses such as bread and shoe factories, department stores and food chains. In spite of the Marxist background of most of the ÖWF's staff, all studies commissioned are based on market research and aim to boost sales.

"For example, we did a great deal of research for the Anker wholesale bakery. The result of our survey – in which I was also involved – was a huge poster reading: 'Why are the Viennese happy to be back from their holidays? Because they've missed their mountain spring water and Anker bread.'"

Reinhard Müller and Lotte Schenk-Danzinger in a conversation with Christian Fleck, 1988

Lazarsfeld emigrates to the United States in September 1933, succeeded by Hans Zeisel as interim head of research, who later passes the baton to Marie Jahoda and Gertrude Wagner. At times, the research unit employs up to 160 researchers.

9/16 Paul Felix Lazarsfeld

"I became a socialist just the way I became Viennese: by birth."

Paul F. Lazarsfeld receives his Philosophy doctorate in 1925. He marries Merie Jahoda in 1927 and becomes assistant professor to Karl and Charlotte Bühler at the *Psychological Institute of the University of Vienna*. In 1931, Lazarsfeld founds the *Austrian Research Unit for Economic Psychology*. That is the year he initiates and develops a concept for the Marienthal study, which he is to direct himself.

The apathy-inducing effect of total unemployment in hindsight helps us understand why the Fuehrer ideology of the emerging National Socialism was so successful.

Prologue to the new edition, 1960

In the autumn of 1933, Paul F. Lazarsfeld receives a fellowship from the *Rockefeller Foundation* and goes to the United States, where he decides to settle permanently in 1935. After a number of academic interludes, Lazarsfeld becomes Professor of Sociology at the Columbia University, New York, in 1940. Throughout his life, he regards himself as a "Marxist on holiday".

10/16 Hans Zeisel

During his studies of law and political sciences, Hans Zeisel joins the *Social Democratic Workers' Party*. He is the interim head of the *Austrian Research Unit for Economic Psychology* from September 1933 to January 1934.

Zeisel takes on-site photographs to document the Marienthal study, and composes its sociographic appendix. It is his idea to time the Marienthal inhabitants' walking speed by stop watch.

For hours on end, the men stand around in the street, alone or in small groups, leaning against the wall of a house or the parapet of the bridge. When a vehicle drives through the village they turn their heads slightly; several of them smoke pipes. They carry on leisurely conversations for which they have unlimited time. Nothing is urgent anymore; they have forgotten how to hurry.

Marienthal. The Sociography of an Unemployed Community, 1933

11/16 Lotte Schenk-Danzinger

Charlotte Schenk-Danziger first meets Marie Jahoda at the *Vereinigung sozialistischer Mittelschüler*. They both receive teacher training at the *Pedagogical Academy of Vienna*; in addition, Danziger studies under Karl and Charlotte Bühler – and becomes their assistant in 1927.

In the winter of 1931/32 Lotte Danziger, who now calls herself “Danzinger”, does most of the field research for the Marienthal study. She spends six weeks on the site, running a winter aid project initiated by Paul Stein that distributes second-hand clothes to the needy.

“Well, I lived there for a while, interviewing people, but I absolutely hated it. [...] I left in the morning, interviewed a few families and wrote everything down in the afternoon. [...] I could hardly write in front of them, could I, or else they would have broken off immediately.”

Reinhard Müller and Lotte Schenk-Danzinger in a conversation with Christian Fleck, 1988

Lotte Danziger lives in London from 1935 to 1937, co-directing the *Parents' Association Institute* founded by Charlotte Bühler. Back in Austria she marries engineer Johann Schenk and becomes a housewife and mother.

From 1946, Lotte Schenk Danziger works for the *Pedagogical Academy of Vienna*. Her vocational career ends in Graz, where from 1969 on she lectures at the *Institute of Educational Sciences*.

12/16 Gertrude and Ludwig Wagner

While still a student, **Gertrude Wagner** joins the *Social Democratic Workers' Party*, whose members also include her husband Ludwig Wagner. They get divorced in 1938.

As a member of the *Research Unit for Economic Psychology* staff, Gertrude Wagner makes a significant contribution to the Marienthal study. She co-directs the *Research Unit* with Marie Jahoda, while at the same time working as a social worker at *Kinderübernahmestelle der Gemeinde Wien* (Vienna's Municipal Forster Care Service).

In 1936, Gertrude Wagner emigrates to London to study sociology and psychology. She reunites with Marie Jahoda at *War-time Social Survey*, a social-scientific research institute working for the government, but returns to Vienna in 1948.

Ludwig Wagner co-founds the left-wing *Vereinigung sozialistischer Mittelschüler* (Association of Socialist Secondary School Pupils) with Paul F. Lazarsfeld in 1918. He arranges summer camps and is the owner of *Der Schulkampf*, which publishes Marie Jahoda's first essay. His reportage on Marienthal, published in *Kleines Blatt* in 1930, is without doubt essential for the realisation of the study.

In March 1938, Wagner flees to Sweden and then to the United States, where he becomes a mastermind of the *Assembly for a Democratic Austrian Republic*.

13/16 Marie Jahoda

Marie Jahoda joins the *Vereinigung sozialistischer Mittelschüler* (Association of Socialist Secondary School Pupils) in 1924.

She receives a teacher training at the *Pedagogical Academy of Vienna* – as does Lotte Danziger – and at the same time studies Psychology under Karl Bühler at the University of Vienna. In 1927, she marries Paul F. Lazarsfeld and gives birth to her daughter Lotte in 1930. They live at the Karl-Marx-Hof municipal building from 1929, but separate in 1932.

In 1931, Marie Jahoda starts working at the *Research Unit for Economic Psychology* – and participates in the Marienthal study at about the same time, composing its main part within a few weeks.

From 1934, Marie Jahoda makes her office available to the *Revolutionary Socialists of Austria*, to be used as a mail and contact office. She is denounced by an informer and imprisoned for three months in 1937.

“In the Austro-Fascist regime, Vienna’s prisons were still prisons [...] Their worst physical characteristic by far was their dreadful sanitary state: worms in the pea soup and thousands of bugs.”

Marie Jahoda, “Ich habe die Welt nicht verändert”, 2002

This sparks an international wave of protest, whereupon Jahoda is released on condition of her leaving Austria immediately. In London, she works as an assistant editor for *War-time Special Survey* and as an editor and speaker for the *Radio Rotes Wien* radio station, along with Walter Wodak.

In 1949, Marie Jahoda is appointed Professor of Psychology at the New York University, but marries the Labour politician Austen Harry Albu and returns to England in 1958. She is recruited by the University of Sussex in 1965, where she establishes Britain’s first Department of Social Psychology.

“Despite economic crisis, inflation, and unemployment this mass movement, based on the tenets of Austro-Marxism, was filled with a spirit of life, which I believe had no parallel in the twentieth century.”

Marie Jahoda, “Aus den Anfängen der Sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung in Österreich”, 1981

14/16 Other Participants in the Study

Elfriede Czeija, née (von) Guttenberg

Elfriede Czeija becomes a member of the Marienthal study research team while still studying psychology under Karl Bühler.

Maria Deutsch

Maria Deutsch is headmistress of a secondary school, municipal councillor and partner of Julius Deutsch, leader of the *Republikanischer Schutzbund*. She flees to Czechoslovakia in 1934, then lives in Spain with Julius Deutsch, and ends up in New York City in 1941. In 1946 she returns to Vienna – and to her former profession as a school headmistress.

Karl Hartl

Karl Hartl, who is also a student at the time, conducts research at Marienthal. From February 1934 he is responsible for the transport and distribution of the banned *Arbeiter-Zeitung* newspaper, among other things. He lives in Paris from 1938 and joins the French Resistance when France surrenders. Upon returning to Austria in 1949, Hartl joins the diplomatic service. He is despatched to Paris, Rome and Tel Aviv, and is eventually appointed Chief of Cabinet to State Secretary Bruno Kreisky. His last post is head of the culture department at the Foreign Ministry.

Clara Jahoda

Marie Jahoda's cousin Clara conducts medical examinations at Marienthal. She emigrates to Britain in 1934, where she works as a school doctor.

Hedwig Jahoda

Maria Deutsch's daughter studies under the Böhlers and conducts research at Marienthal. In 1935 she gets married to the conductor Fritz Jahoda, Marie's brother. They emigrate to Britain and on to the United States, where Hedwig Jahoda works as a psychologist.

Paul Stein

The physician Paul Stein carries out medical examinations at Marienthal and organises the winter aid project run by Lotte Danziger.

Josefine Stross

The paediatricist and trained psychoanalyst conducts medical examinations as part of a study. In 1938 she emigrates to Britain with Anna and Sigmund Freud, whom she cares for until his death.

Walter Wodak

Walter Wodak works for the Marienthal team as a student. He leaves the country for Britain in 1939, joins the *London Bureau of the Austrian Socialists* and runs *Radio Rotes Wien*, along with Marie Jahoda, among others. After the war, Wodak returns to Vienna and joins the diplomatic service. He is deployed in London, Paris, Belgrade, and Moscow, and ultimately becomes General Secretary at the Foreign Ministry.

Ilse Zeisel

Hans Zeisel's sister studies under Charlotte Bühler. In 1936, the highly talented athlete refuses to participate in the Berlin Olympic Games in protest against National Socialism. She emigrates to the United States in 1938 and resumes her studies under Lazarsfeld and others. As a market researcher, she works closely with her brother.

Kurt Zinram

Zinram participates in the Marienthal study as a physician. He emigrates to Switzerland in 1939, but dies shortly after.

Josef Bilkovsky

Josef Bilkovsky, a trained weaver, is mayor of Gramatneusiedl from 1919 to 1934. As such, he does all he can to support the team behind the Marienthal study.

15/16 The Study

When Paul F. Lazarsfeld conceives a study on leisure behaviour in 1931, the mastermind of Austro-Marxism, Otto Bauer, dismisses the scheme as inappropriate, in view of the mass unemployment. Instead, Bauer suggests conducting an academic study on unemployment. The study is carried out by a team of 15 individuals.

The pioneering nature of the Marienthal study lies in its combination of the methods it applies, many of which are only developed in the course of the survey. The team of researchers compile statistics, draw cadastral plans, conduct interviews, record life careers, measure walking speeds (at Hans Zeisel's suggestion), and analyse school essays and time management sheets.

Between the three reference points of getting up, eating, and going to bed lie intervals of inactivity hard to describe for an observer and apparently also difficult to describe for the man himself. He merely knows that "in the meantime midday comes around".

Marienthal. The Sociography of an Unemployed Community, 1933

16/16 The Study

When the fieldwork is concluded in May 1932, Marie Jahoda retreats into the mountains and within a few weeks distils the main part of the study from the collected material. The credit for the high literary quality of the text belongs to her alone.

“Marienthal. The Sociography of an Unemployed Community” is first published in June 1933, with Leipzig-based publisher S. Hirzel. The authors’ names do not feature on the front page, which is possibly a concession to the National Socialists, who have by now taken power in Germany.

The study is reviewed favourably in France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States, and even in Germany, where unemployment is a burning issue at the time. In Austria, by contrast, it is widely neglected.

Late Acclaim

Only its 1960 reprint brings the study to a wider audience, until finally the 1971 English edition “Marienthal. The Sociography of an Unemployed Community” makes it a classic of empirical social research once and for all.

Of all the conclusions to be drawn from the Marienthal study, the most alarming one is to be found in the chapter on “A Weary Community”. It is diametrically opposed to the common notion of the unemployed as a “revolutionary subject”. To put it in Maria Jahoda’s own words from 1981: *“Unemployment entails resignation rather than revolution.”*