

Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien (est. 1942): Muslims in Vienna between Collaboration and Protection of Jews during the Second World War¹

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Abstract

The paper addresses the forgotten history of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* (registered name: *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien*) the Muslim organisation in Vienna during the Second World War. It begins by reviewing the scant information in the literature, which places the organisation exclusively in a context of collaboration. Based on statements from a contemporary witness and obscure Croatian secret police sources, it then draws a complex picture of a small community of mainly Bosnian Muslim students, caught between Nazi recruitment for the nascent 13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS “Handschar”, Bosniak autonomist aspirations, and the personal desire to avoid military service, and includes its efforts to protect Jews. Through this, the paper illuminates the early history of a group whose core members played a central role in Islamic community institutionalisation in post-war Austria, and culminated in the organisation’s official reapproval in 1979.

Key words: Second World War, Muslims, Austria, Vienna, Handschar Division, Smail Balic, Bosnia, Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich

1 This paper was financially supported by the Center for Advanced Studies (Sarajevo) and the University of Salzburg. The topic has been presented summarily at two academic conferences, in: Dautović, “The Presence of Muslims in Austria during the Nazi Period: On the Example of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien*” (Annual Conference of the Austrian Studies Association 2022, New Orleans, 14 April 2022); and Dautović, “Die Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien während des Zweiten Weltkriegs: Und ihre weitreichende Wirkung für die österreichischen Muslim*innen in der Gegenwart” (Österreichischer Zeitgeschichtetag 2022, Salzburg, 22 April 2022).

Introduction

Although the history of Muslims in Austria is relatively unexplored, their situation during the Second World War is more obscure than, for example, during the interwar and monarchy periods. As was often the case in the history of Muslims in Austria, Vienna was central during this period, since with the formation of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* (Islamic Community in Vienna), the organisation's members (with Smail Balić playing an essential role) shaped the history of Islamic institutionalisation in post-war Austria, and have had a lasting impact on Muslims to this day.

The significance of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* must also be viewed against the background that although Muslims in Austria were recognised as a “religious society” (*Religionsgesellschaft*) by the Islam Act² of 1912 (Article I), it was not considered capable of acting as an organisation for the time being. In accordance with the official thesis – motivated by political unwillingness – that Muslims in Austria did not have any religious organisational structures, i.e. religious communities (*Kultusgemeinden*) in 1912, and would not have them in the near future, an atypical legal regulation (§ 1) was added.³ According to this regulation, the religious society of Muslims should only then be able to act corporately and claim the associated rights after securing the existence of a first *Kultusgemeinde*.

The founding of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* in 1942 was the first explicit establishment of an Islamic *Kultusgemeinde* in Austria. The problems with, and resistance to, this central legal motive that reappeared already at the time of its founding would concern the organisation's founding members remaining in Austria for decades to come. The situation was only resolved in 1979, with governmental approval of the first Islamic *Kultusgemeinde* (after again being notified to the authorities as the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* in 1971),⁴ whereby the entire religious society of Muslims in Austria could formally take action for the first time, under the self-chosen name *Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in*

2 Gesetz, vom 12. Juli 1912, betreffend die Anerkennung der Anhänger des Islams nach hanefitischem Ritus als Religionsgesellschaft [Act of 12 July 1912, regarding the recognition of adherents of Islam according to the Hanefi rite as a religious society], RGBl. [Imperial Law Gazette], no. 159/1912.

3 Dautović, “Die Geschichte eines Vorwands”, *Qamar: Muslimisches Magazin für Kultur und Gesellschaft*, no. 1 (2020), 50-1; and Dautović, “Der völkerrechtliche Hintergrund der Anerkennung der islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich: Zur Genese des Art. 4 des Protokolls vom 26. Februar 1909 und seiner Bedeutung für die Rechtsstellung der Muslime in Österreich”, in *Die Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich. 1909-1979-2019: Beiträge zu einem neuen Blick auf ihre Geschichte und Entwicklung*, Dautović and Farid Hafez (ed.) (Vienna; Hamburg: new academic press, 2019), pp. 57-61.

4 For a reference to the name, see the introduction of the administrative decision, “Bescheid des Bundesministeriums für Unterricht und Kunst” of 2 May 1979 in: Salim A. Hadžić, “Der Moslemische Sozialdienst als Träger der Konstituierung der Islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich”, in *Die Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*, Dautović and Hafez (ed.), p. 149.

Österreich (Islamic Religious Community in Austria). It is therefore impossible to discuss the constitutionalisation of the *Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich* – which is unique in Western Europe, and active to this day – without addressing the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* and its effects in the post-war decades.⁵

Readers familiar with the history of Muslims in Austria may be irritated by the use of *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* in the title of this paper, as *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien* is the version that appears in what little literature there is. This name, like its legal form as a registered association (*Verein*), was the imposed will of the authorities, and contrary to the decision of the founders.⁶ This, however, did not prevent them from calling their organisation even decades later by the self-chosen name *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien*.⁷



Figure 1. The association's letterhead

The decision to primarily use the members' self-designation in the paper instead of following the usual state-oriented approach is also due to extensive discrepancies and differences between the actual *Gemeinde* and the legal form approved by the authorities, and because of the latter being afflicted with gross unlawfulness. In the literature, with the imposed name *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien* it is implied that it was an association (registered "under no. 89/10"), founded in

- 5 For more information, see: Dautović, "40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien: Warum die Islamische Religionsgemeinde Wien nicht erst 1979 gegründet wurde", in *Die Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*, Dautović, and Hafez (ed.), pp. 99-123; and Hadžić, "Der Moslemische Sozialdienst", pp. 125-51.
- 6 In this regard, there is a translation issue that needs to be addressed for the sake of clarity and transparency. Considered in isolation, both versions of the name (*Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* and *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien*) would be best translated as "Islamic Community in Vienna". In German, however, *Gemeinde* has an additional linguistic implication that was of prime relevance to the name change: it is also the term for state municipalities. The paper will therefore use the German form where formal names are to be used. When referring to the *Gemeinde* informally and with no need for terminological contrast, the term "community" will be used (otherwise the German terms *Gemeinde* and *Gemeinschaft* will be used); and if a linguistic understanding is required, *Gemeinde* is translated as "municipality" (only in fn 85). Translations were done by the author. Linguistically or contextually necessary additions are given within square brackets.
- 7 Muhamed Pilav, *U ustaškoj emigraciji s Pavelićem: sjećanja vječitog pobunjenika, zatvorenika, bjegunca* (Zurich: Bošnjački institut, 1996), p. 107. Even after this, however, the renaming authorities regularly referred to it internally as *islamische Gemeinde* or *islamische Kultusgemeinde*; Pilot to Szykewicz, 21 March 1944, Bundesarchiv (BArch) NS 31/43, sheets 118-9.

1943, with Salih Hadžialić⁸ as chairman, its headquarters at *Jasomirgottstrasse 2*, and with some members of the leadership “politically compromised” themselves and therefore the association having been dissolved in 1948 at the instigation of the other members.⁹ The older (published) literature does not provide much more information.¹⁰



Figure 2. The 13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS in Neuhammer (Silesia), in November 1943. Salih Hadžialić is seated on the far left; Amin Al-Husseini in the middle; and Nedim Salihbegović is standing on the far right (fn 81). All mentioned are wearing civilian clothes.

More recent publications provide additional information about particular aspects of their organisational history. Motadel, for example, puts the *Gemeinschaft* in a collaborative context (which had previously only been assumed), pointing

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- 8 Salih Hadžialić (later also: Salih Hadži Alić and Salih H. Alich) was born 1913 in Donje Moštre (Bosnia), studied at Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa in Sarajevo and the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and died in 1997 in Visoko. From 1941 he studied in Berlin, from 1943 in Vienna, and after the war in Innsbruck. From 1948 he was a researcher at the Pontificium Institutum Orientalium in Rome, before emigrating to Claremont in the USA in 1951. In 1967 he returned to Bosnia, and worked at the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo from 1971 to 1976: Aida Hercegalija, “Salih ef. Hadžialić: Život i da’wetsko djelovanje”, Bachelor Thesis, University in Zenica, 2013, pp. 6–8.
- 9 One of the oldest references to the *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien* in literature, from which this information originates and on which almost all later authors rely, comes from Smail Balić, in: Balić (ed.), *Die Muslims im Donauraum: Österreich und der Islam* (Vienna: Moslemischer Sozialdienst, 1971), p. 7–8., which is actually a reprint from: Balić, “Der Islam in Oesterreich,” *Der Islam*, 9:1 (1957), 6–7; see also: Balić, “Zur Geschichte der Muslime in Österreich I”, in *Islam zwischen Selbstbild und Klischee: Eine Religion im österreichischen Schulbuch*, Susanne Heine (ed.) (Cologne; Weimar-Vienna: Böhlau, 1995), p. 28.
- 10 A relatively large amount of information based on the association file can, however, be found in Oliver Pintz’s unpublished dissertation, “Vom Moslemischen Sozialdienst zur Islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft (IGGiÖ)” (Dissertation, University of Vienna, 2006), pp. 80–108.

out that it received a visit from the Jerusalem mufti Al-Husseini in 1943, and was supported by the Nazis.¹¹ Further, he elucidates the role of chairman Salih Hadžialić in supporting the SS' efforts to recruit Muslims in Lithuania.¹² Bougarel gives a slightly more nuanced picture in a footnote of his recent book on the Handschar Division (13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS), in which he points to an internal conflict between Hadžialić and his competitor Murat Bajrović, and resistance to recruitment attempts. This reflected the conflict that had taken place in Bosnia and Herzegovina between those loyal to the fascist *Nezavisna država Hrvatska* (Independent State of Croatia, or NDH) and Muslim autonomists.¹³ Their comments, however, are brief, since Austria is not the focus of their books.

My own 2019 contribution on the history of the *Islamische Religionsgemeinde Wien* (Islamic Religious Community Vienna) for the 40th anniversary of the constitutionalisation of the *Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich* (Islamic Religious Community in Austria), contains the most comprehensive account of the history of the Vienna-based community during the Second World War to date.¹⁴ Its focus is, however, primarily on legal aspects,¹⁵ and as a result, it ignores many aspects of the community's history, and does not include some important sources that were discovered subsequently. Perhaps the most remarkable of these, given the temporal distance to the events in question, is Nurko Gazija¹⁶ (who participated in the community meetings), whom I interviewed in 2019 and 2020.

Otherwise, this paper is based on archival material from the Vienna City and State Archives (association files), the Arolsen Archives, the German Federal Archives and little-known but crucial material from the NDH secret police (obtained from

11 David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 193; Berger to Himmler, 19 April 1943, BArch R 19/2255.

12 Motadel, *Islam*, p. 236; Pilot to Szykewicz, 21 March 1944, BArch NS 31/43, sheets 118-9.

13 Xavier Bougarel, *La division Handschar: Waffen-SS de Bosnie, 1943-1945* (Paris: Passés composés/Humensis, 2020, Kindle version), loc. 6834 and 6856 (fn 58).

14 Dautović, "40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien", pp. 99–123.

15 Although this article does not address legal issues in depth, some central motives and roles surrounding the founding of the community can be revealed only through legal analysis.

16 Nurko Gazija was born in Rogatica (Bosnia) in 1921, schooled in Rogatica and Sarajevo, and was a member of the Young Muslims (*Mladi muslimani*) in his youth: Gazija, personal interview, Chicago, 3 February 2020 (part 1/2), 02:41:40 (00:20:45). He moved to Graz (Austria) in May 1941, and after the war lived in Döllach im Mölltal, Lienz and Salzburg as a displaced person, until emigrating to Chicago (USA) in 1950. He was one of the founding members of the Muslim Religious and Cultural Home (later renamed the Bosnian-American Cultural Association) in Chicago. For more on his life, see: Mugdim Karabeg, "Kroz iglene uši izbjegao vojske: Gost Zambaka Nurko Gazija", *Zambak BiH Odjek Inc.* (Chicago), March 1999, no. 19, pp. 10–11.

When interviewed, Gazija was in excellent mental health despite his advanced age. His recollections were rich in detail and, as far as can be ascertained, did not contradict his private photographs or data from other primary sources. Where problems arose regarding dates, they could usually be resolved by comparing sources.

I express my gratitude to Nurko Gazija and his family, especially his daughter Soraya Howard, who put me in touch with her father and arranged the interviews.

the Archives of the Serbian Armed Forces). The paper is also guided by the general endeavour to gather all available data on the history of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* and its protagonists, which, apart from what little is known about its “official”, registered form, is preserved in a rudimentary way, in scattered sources. The paper asks the questions of who and what the real community was, compared to its registered form, i.e., what it wanted, who its members were, and what their relationship was to the National Socialists and their policies. Additionally, by examining the personal biographies of its protagonists, it highlights post-war and contemporary implications, thereby underlining the importance of the subject and creating additional starting points for related research.

The community’s historical context and informal beginnings

The formation of what was to become the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* during the Second World War took place under conditions that were precarious in several respects. As during the monarchy,¹⁷ Vienna had an Islamic organisation in the interwar period – the *Islamischer Kulturbund in Wien* (Islamic Culture Association in Vienna)¹⁸ – which was dissolved by the National Socialists in 1939 without any formal justification.¹⁹ It was relatively clear, however, that the anti-fascist attitude of individual members (especially the first chairman, Umar Rolf von Ehrenfels) was probably the unofficial reason,²⁰ in part because the commissioner responsible for the dissolution was charged with ensuring all associations were aligned with National Socialist principles.²¹ If they had not already left the country, its members were probably interned²² if they were nationals of hostile countries (most members were students from British-administered Egypt).²³ This

17 For more, see: Dautović, “Islamitisch Akademischer Verein ‚Zvijezda‘: Über den 1904 gegründeten ersten muslimischen Verein in Österreich”, *Wiener Geschichtsblätter*, 74:4 (2019), pp. 397–410.

18 Omar Nasr, “Organised Muslims in Interwar Austria on the Example of the ‘Islamischer Kulturbund’ in Vienna” (Master Thesis, SOAS University of London, 2021); and Association file “Islamischer Kulturbund in Wien”, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (WStLA), M. Abt. 119.A32, 6899/1932.

19 No reasoning was required, according to § 3 of the *Gesetz über die Überleitung und Eingliederung von Vereinen* (Law on the Transfer and Integration of Associations); GBl. für Österreich [Law Gazette for Austria], no. 136/1938.

20 Balić, “Zur Geschichte der Muslime in Österreich I”, p. 28.

21 § 1, *Verordnung des Reichsstatthalters zur Durchführung des Gesetzes über die Überleitung und Eingliederung von Vereinen, Organisationen und Verbänden* (Ordinance of the Reich Governor for the Implementation of the Law on the Transition and Integration of Associations, Organisations and Unions), GBl. für Österreich, no. 137/1938.

22 Marcel Chahrour, “Im ‘Mekka der Medizin’: Studierende aus der arabischen Welt an der Wiener Medizinischen Fakultät 1848-1960”, in *Strukturen und Netzwerke: Medizin und Wissenschaft in Wien 1848-1955*, Daniela Angetter et al. (ed.) (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2018), p. 502.

23 Chahrour, “Im ‘Mekka der Medizin’”, pp. 499 and 501. In a personal attempt to count Muslim prisoners of the Mauthausen (Austria) concentration camp (based on religious confession or names), I have so far

makes it clear that any further form of Muslim organisational life in Vienna would not take place without the blessing of the National Socialists.²⁴

In addition to this was another precarious circumstance: those who were to form the core of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* were Bosnian students who came to Vienna to study relatively soon after the establishment of the NDH (April 1941). According to Gazija, the Bosnian students came to Austria for the same reason, regardless of their political leanings: to avoid conscription into the Croatian Army.²⁵ The situation was similar for Gazija himself, who had lost his father at an early age, from a First World War injury. He consequently avoided military service in Bosnia, and fled to Graz (Austria) in May 1941, where he worked as a welder.²⁶

Gazija's assessment of the Bosnian Muslim students' chief motive for coming to Vienna is confirmed in an internal NDH secret police report (GRAVSIGUR, department II/B) from October 1943, which ended up at the NDH foreign ministry. The report stated that in June 1943, only 20 of around 100 Croatian²⁷ students in Vienna returned home for military service, and they were "mainly Ustasha".²⁸ Another report from the same department in November that year (also directed to the NDH foreign ministry) states that in general, Croatian students in Vienna "neither responded to the conscription of the ministry of the armed forces, nor did they start their military service", whereupon they were classified as "actual draft evaders".²⁹

For the students, this fact was of particular importance. As the same document further states,

counted 141 names, among them many Bosniaks and Eastern European Muslims (Tatars), but also Arabs and Albanians.

- 24 Chahrour's remarks imply that there was not a direct transition from the *Islamischer Kulturbund* to the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* (Chahrour, "Im 'Mekka der Medizin'", p. 499), and the political situation at the time would have made it impossible. Key figures from both organisations (particularly Umar Rolf von Ehrenfels and Smail Balić), however, worked together after the war in Vienna's central Muslim association, the Muslim Social Service. Mohammad Ali Binni, along with von Ehrenfels – one of the three founders of the *Islamischer Kulturbund* – was also a sponsor of Balić's Muslim Social Service; Balić, *Die Muslims im Donauraum*, p. 98.
- 25 Gazija, personal interview, 8 December 2019, 00:26:48 (00:08:00).
- 26 Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:03:15; Gazija, personal interview, Chicago, 2 February 2020, 01:44:22 (00:04:15, 00:06:50, 00:57:15).
- 27 In state language, Bosnian Muslims were "Croats of Islamic faith", regardless of whether they identified as such; Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 493-4.
- 28 Bogat, "Podatci o hrvatskim studentima u Beču" [Data about Croatian students in Vienna], 29 October 1943, no. V.T. 411, V.T./10202/11/1943, Arhiv oružanih snaga [Archives of the Serbian Armed Forces], Belgrade, NDH fund, box 256/II, fasc. 8, doc. 5, sheet 2.
- 29 Rukavina to Perić, "Hrvatski sveučilištarci u Beču" [Croatian students in Vienna], 19 November 1943, no. V.T. 424, V.T./16943/8/1943, 1, Arhiv oružanih snaga, Belgrade, NDH fund, box 256/II, fasc. 8, doc. 7, sheet 5 (p. 1).

[...] if a person wishes to enrol at the University of Vienna, he must be a member of some association from whose club he obtains approval, with which he obtains further approval from the German-Foreign Student Club, and only then will he be allowed to enrol. – ‘August Šenoa’ [a Croatian student association in Vienna],³⁰ however, could not give the draft evaders such approval, so they could not enrol. On occasion, however, the German-Foreign Student Club allowed individuals to enrol without permission from ‘August Šenoa’.

The Croatian authorities were primarily concerned that the students, who tended to be critical of the regime in Zagreb, could give the Germans the wrong impression, and they intended to solve the problem with a kind of extradition agreement with the Reich. This was counteracted by the fact that some students were issued alien passports, which the Viennese authorities largely tolerated with the knowledge that they were draft evaders. Later events may explain why this was the case, and what political interests it served. Together, these circumstances illustrate the insecure and dependent situation of Bosnian Muslim students, and explain why they considered founding their own Islamic organisation towards the end of 1942.

An informal group of Bosnian Muslim students appears to have formed as early as 1941. Gazija’s first stay in Austria lasted about eight months, from May that year, and he states that during that time “I went to Vienna. That’s how I met Dr. Smail Balić³¹ and the rest of our students who were there”. On some of his frequent stays in Vienna in 1941 and 1942, Gazija stayed with Balić, and attended meetings of Bosnian Muslim students. He then went to work in Berlin for eight months, but kept returning to Austria (including in July 1943), until he eventually settled in Vienna in February 1944.³² In the interviews, which were conducted in Bosnian, Gazija uses the German term *Hochhaus* (high-rise building)

30 “Croatia Academica; Kroatisch Akademischer Verein ‘August Senva’”, WStLA, M.Ab. 1.3.2.119. A32, 1132/1942.

31 Smail Balić was born in Mostar in 1920, and died in Vienna in 2003. He studied at the Gazi Husrevbeg Madrasa and the Higher Islamic Sharia Theological College, both in Sarajevo. He was awarded a scholarship at the boarding home of the Croatophile Muslim association *Narodna uzdanica* in Zagreb, and was a member of its *Hrvatski akademski klub* [Croatian Academic Club] “Musa Ćazim Ćatić”. During that time, he was an intern in the culture department of the NDH Ministry of Justice and Religion, which in autumn 1941 sent him to Vienna to study oriental philology. Upon his return, a teaching position at the University of Zagreb would have been provided; “Ispiti na Gazi Husrevbegovoj medresi”, *Islamski svijet*, no. 148 (1935), 6; and Zlatko Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu 1878-1945: Doba utemeljenja* (Zagreb: Medžlis IZ u Zagrebu, Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, 2007), pp. 138 and 214.

The migration of young Muslims to Vienna, officially for study purposes, seems to have been accepted by the authorities, at least initially, confirming Gazija’s assessment that it was the result of NDH Vice President Osman Kulenović’s intercession, which aimed to protect the future Bosnian Muslim intelligentsia: Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:07:54.

32 Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:03:54; Postwar Card File, DP Statistical Card, Gazija Nurko, 1950, 3.1.1.1/6713567/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives; Gazija, personal interview, 2 February 2020, 00:52:14.

where some of them were living as the location of the meetings, but could no longer identify it.³³ It must have been the first high-rise building in Vienna, which was built in 1931 at *Herrengasse* 6-8, and was the only high-rise building until the post-war period, which was generally known by this colloquial name.³⁴ Apart from Balić, Gazija mentioned Muhiddin Hećimović,³⁵ Fadil Merhemić³⁶

33 Gazija, personal interview, 2 February 2020, 00:37:10.

34 Felix Pollak, "Das Erste Wiener Hochhaus", *Österreichische Bauzeitung*, 8:45 (1932), 571–82. It is unclear exactly where they could have met, but Bosnian Muslim student Fadil Mehmedagić (see fn 47), who was in Vienna at least since 1943, lived at *Herrengasse* 6-8/6.

Fadil Mehmedagić, was born in Brčko (Bosnia) in 1918, and died in Los Angeles in 2007. He emigrated to the USA in 1949, and adopted the shortened name Fadil Mehmed when he was naturalised in 1955. He appears as a donor in a publication by Balić from 1952, alongside Gazija and Maslić (see fn 40); Postwar Card File, DP Statistical Card, Mehmedagic Fadil, 1949, 3.1.1.1./68233228/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives; Fadil Mehmedagić, "Finanzielle Hilfe für den Obstproduzenten: ein Hauptproblem der jugoslawischen Wirtschaft" (Dissertation, Hochschule für Welthandel, Vienna 1946); and Smail Balić, *Etičko naličje bosansko-hercegovačkih muslimana* (Vienna: self-published, 1952), p. 4.

35 Muhiddin Hećimović was born in Travnik (Bosnia) in 1922, and attended a grammar school in Tuzla until 1941. He studied civil engineering from 1941 to 1946, and architecture from 1946 to 1948 at the *Technische Hochschule* (Technical University) in Vienna. From 1947 to 1949 he was a research assistant at the same university, and received his doctorate in architecture in 1950 with his dissertation "Ein Beitrag zu der Geschichte und Technologie des monolithen Betonbaues" (Hećimović, Dissertation, Vienna, Technische Hochschule, 1950). In the same year he emigrated to Chicago, where he got involved in local Muslim community life, and became the first vice president of the newly founded International Muslim Society (later renamed the Federation of Islamic Associations) in 1953. During the course of his naturalisation, he shortened his name to Dean Hakim. He was a member of Chicago's Muslim Religious and Cultural Home until at least 1958: "Mevlud u Chicagu", *Svijest: Glasilo bosansko-hercegovačkih muslimana u emigraciji*, no. 37 and 39 (Nov./Dec. 1953), 17; "Dean Hakim" 1958, in *Members Donation 1955-1961 III – Moslem Religious and Cultural Home*, Islamic Cultural Center of Greater Chicago (Museum). I express my gratitude to the ICCGC and (in particular its librarian and teacher, Muhammed Al-Ahari) for providing support in this regard. Hećimović eventually became estranged from the Chicago community, giving rise to rumours that he had converted to Christianity. According to his son, however, "he proudly represented himself as Moslem" throughout his life. From 1959, he worked in France and then Germany as an engineer for the US military. He died in 1992 in Heidelberg (not in Chicago, as I wrongly assumed in Dautović, "40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien", p. 116 [fn 97]), and was buried in Holmdel, New Jersey: Dwight O. Hakim, personal communication, 27 January 2020. I am grateful to his son for relevant biographical information.

36 Fadil Ismet Merhemić was born in Sarajevo in 1919, and died in Sarasota (Florida) in 1991. He studied at the Islamic Grammar School in Sarajevo, and the Medical School of the University of Zagreb (from at least 1938) and, like Balić, lived at the *Narodna uzdanica* boarding home in Zagreb. He went to Vienna in 1941, where he was employed at the NDH's Viennese consulate, and studied at the *Hochschule für Welthandel*. From 1945, he lived as a displaced person in Salzburg and Klagenfurt (1949-1950), and was involved in the Salzburg-based Muslim community (from 1951 as vice president of the Association of Moslems of Austria). In 1952 he emigrated to Cleveland in the US, where he received his degree in library science in 1959, and subsequently had a career as a university librarian and assistant professor in Columbus. He was a founding member of Chicago's Muslim Religious and Cultural Home in 1955, and co-founder of the Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio in 1971. He was also a member of the Austrian Society for Bosnian-Herzegovinian Relations, founded in Graz in 1989 (see fn 137): "The Ohio State University Official Proceedings of the One Thousand Two Hundred and Seventy-Fifth Meeting of the Board of Trustees", 6 September 1991, p. 229-30, <https://kb.osu.edu/handle/1811/50229>, accessed 1 July 2023; Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 124 and 216; Muharem Zulfić, *100 godina Bošnjaka u Čikagu: Džemijetul Hajrije* (Chicago: Džemijetul Hajrije, 2003), p. 146; "Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio (IFCO)", [http://muslimacrossamerica.net/auth.php?type=Tour&ArtTitle=islamic_foundation_of_central_ohio_\(ifco\)](http://muslimacrossamerica.net/auth.php?type=Tour&ArtTitle=islamic_foundation_of_central_ohio_(ifco)), accessed 29 January 2022; and Ahmo B. (Ahmed Balagija), "Merhum prof. Fadil Merhemić", *Preporod*, 15 April 1991, no. 8-495, p. 20.

and Kemal Fočo,³⁷ who belonged to the core group, as expressed in other sources.³⁸ He also mentioned Adem Handžić³⁹ and Mehmed Maslić⁴⁰ in connection with the students, who were both reading Oriental Studies in Vienna, but remembered that they were also military imams “in the Croatian camps near Vienna”.⁴¹ These will have been the barracks of the *Prinz-Eugen-* and the *Jägerkaserne* in Stockerau, where the 369th (Croatian) Infantry Division of the *Wehrmacht* (a training brigade) was deployed.⁴² He also named Ahmed Balagija,⁴³

37 Kemal Fočo was born in Sarajevo in 1920, and died in Cleveland (USA) in 2007. He studied economics in Vienna from 1941, and became an accountant. In the post-war years, he lived in various DP camps in Salzburg, Gmunden, Linz and Klagenfurt before emigrating to Cleveland in 1952: Postwar Card File: Foco Kemal, 1950, 3.1.1.1/67064715-67064717 and DE I e Emigrations in 1952, Foco Kemal, 3.1.3.2/81684201/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives.

38 In Gazija's second interview (2020), he additionally mentioned Esad Hrasnica alongside the aforementioned names: Gazija, personal interview, 2 February 2020, 00:35:45.

39 Adem Handžić was born in Tešanj (Bosnia) in 1914, and died in 1998. He graduated from the Higher Islamic Sharia Theological College in Sarajevo, and was an intern at the Tešanj Sharia court. He was most likely only in Vienna as of winter semester of 1942-1943, on a Humboldt scholarship. According to Gazija, he also spent time in Berlin. His completed dissertation is said to have been under review in Vienna in 1945, when it was destroyed in the city's bombardment. He finally received his doctorate in 1970 in Sarajevo: “Adem Handžić, diplomirani šeriatski pravnik, odlazi na bečko sveučilište”, *Osvit*, 1 November 1942, no. 36, p. 5; Amir Brka, *O dr. Ademu Handžiću: uz stogodišnjicu rođenja: sjećanja, fotografije, dokumenti, razmišljanja: izlaganje na hommađu u CKO Tešanj 10.9.2016. godine* (Tešanj: Centar za kulturu i obrazovanje, 2017); and Nedim Zahirović, “Nekoliko podataka o školovanju dr. Adema Handžića u Beču”, in *Djelo dr. Adema Handžića: Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog simpozija: Tešanj, 15. i 16. 2. 2006 godine*, Amir Brka (ed.) (Tešanj: Centar za kulturu i obrazovanje, 2008), pp. 15-8. I am deeply grateful to Amir Brka and CKO Tešanj for providing publications and information on Handžić.

40 Mehmed Maslić was born in Janja (Bosnia) in 1910, and died in Cairo in 1989. He graduated from the Higher Islamic Sharia Theological College in Sarajevo, and was a Sharia court intern when he was drafted into the Croatian army as a military imam in 1943. He was most likely deployed in the 369th (Croatian) Infantry Division (training brigade) in Stockerau, near Vienna; “Izvod iz Vjestnika Ministarstva Oružanih Snaga - Osobni poslovni broj 35 od 25. VIII. 1943. str. 1315-1317”, *Glasić Islamske vjerske zajednice NDH*, 11:10 (1943), 255; and Franz Schraml, *Kriegsschauplatz Kroatien: Die deutsch-kroatischen Legions-Divisionen - 369., 373., 392. Inf.-Div. (kroat.) - ihre Ausbildungs- und Ersatzformationen* (Neckargemünd: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1962), p. 153-4. He studied oriental studies at the University of Vienna from the winter semester of 1943-1944 and received his doctorate in 1947: Zahirović, “Nekoliko podataka”, p. 17; see also: Mehmed Maslić, “Das islamische Erbrecht: nach der hanefitischen Schule unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der scheriatsrechtlichen Praxis in Bosnien und der Herzegowina” (Dissertation, University of Vienna, 1947). Gazija, who at the end of the war fled to Carinthia via Salzburg in a group with Maslić, mentions that Maslić was accompanied by his wife, Fatima. One of Gazija's photos from c. 1945 in Carinthia shows their daughter Mukadesa, which suggests she was with them too. The family emigrated to Egypt in 1948; “IRO Paris to IRO Cairo”, 5 November 1948, Mehmed Maslić, 3.2.1.4/81092594/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives.

41 Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:18:19.

42 Schraml, *Kriegsschauplatz Kroatien*, p. 153-4. According to Schraml, 700 of the 6000 Croatian soldiers in the division were Muslims, including “so-called ‘students’”: Schraml, *Kriegsschauplatz Kroatien*, p. 26. Gazija's testimony about Maslić and Handžić is revealing, as it explains why, despite occasional references in the literature to them being military imams, there is no indication they were members of the Handschar Division. The fact that there were military imams in the Croatian *Wehrmacht* legions was most likely not considered: Mustafa Imamović, *Bošnjaci u emigraciji: monografija “Bosanskih pogleda” 1955-1967* (Sarajevo: Bošnjački institut, 1996), p. 81; see also: Žija Sulejmanpašić, *13. SS divizija “Handžar”: Istine i laži* (Zagreb: Kulturno društvo Bošnjaka “Preporod”, 2000), p. 410.

43 Ahmed “Ahmo” Balagija was born in Donji Vakuf (Bosnia) in 1919. He graduated from the technical secondary school in Sarajevo in 1940, and initially studied at the Technical University in Belgrade. According to information given to the IRO, he entered Austria in July 1941: Postwar Card File, DP

Zijah Spaho⁴⁴ and Faik Đonlagić,⁴⁵ who were probably rather simple members of the community. The NDH secret police specified the number of “Croatian” Muslim students in Vienna in October 1943 as approximately 20,⁴⁶ but named “MERHENIĆ, HEĆIMOVIĆ, BALIĆ, FOČO”,⁴⁷

Statistical Card, Amo Achmed Balagija, 1948/49, 3.1.1.1/66481863/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives. Gazija, who knew Balagija from Sarajevo, remembered him from his stays in Vienna during the war. In his list of wartime Bosniak students in Vienna, legal historian Mustafa Imamović names an “Abdulah Balagija” (sic.): Imamović, *Bošnjaci u emigraciji*, p. 92. According to Gazija, Balagija was in the Croatian army during the war: Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:10:10. According to other information, most likely his own (“JAI-Austria: vice-president Ahmed Balagija”, *Jami’at al Islam Bulletin*, 5:2 [1959], 5), Balagija was deployed with the *Wehrmacht* in Russia. He was therefore most likely in its 369th (Croatian) Infantry Division, deployed in Stockerau near Vienna, or possibly the preceding Reinforced (Croatian) Infantry Regiment 369. UDB (Yugoslav secret police) documents do not give a source, but suggest an affiliation with SS units (note that the 13th Waffen Mountain Division was never deployed in Russia), with which he allegedly came to Austria: Bože Vukušić, *Tajni rat Udbe protiv hrvatskih iseljenika iz Bosne i Hercegovine* (Zagreb: Klub hrvatskih povratnika iz iseljeništa, 2002), p. 234. The same text, contrary to other sources, gives Balagija’s year of birth as 1921, instead of 1919, as does Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), p. 153. Balagija was a founding member of the Muslim Religious and Cultural Home in Chicago, and vice president of the Austrian (later German) section of Jami’at al Islam.

44 Zijah Spaho was born in 1920, and died in 1992. He was the son of Mehmed Spaho, the leading Bosniak politician in interwar Yugoslavia and co-founder of the first Muslim association in Austria; Dautović, “Zvijezda”, 399 and 401. Spaho first studied law, but switched to something mathematics-related in Graz. After the war he returned to Yugoslavia, went back to law, and embarked on a career as a lawyer and judge: Harun Crnovršanin, “Ubistvo Dr. Mehmeda Spahe 1939. god., dokumentarni film Haruna Crnovršanina” (2012), 00:27:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oDZLaDGZvc>, accessed 23 January 2022. I am grateful to his son, Mehmed Spaho, for information about, and photographs of, his late father.

45 Faik Đonlagić was born in Tešanj (Bosnia) in 1913, and died in Vienna in 1947 (his grave is at the Vienna Central Cemetery, gate 3, group 25, row 8, no. 119, reserved until 4 October 2026). He was the son of the locally-known and wealthy mayor of Tešanj, Zija-beg Đonlagić. In 1945, he married Hildegard Luise Finsterer (born in Nuremberg in 1924) in Salzburg, by an imam (Ishak Imamović) of the community that had been relocated there from Vienna. Their daughter Leila was born in Vienna in 1946. Her legitimacy in the eyes of the state occupied Austria’s highest courts from 1959 to 1961, and led to a reassessment of the legal form of the Salzburg/Viennese community: Dautović, “40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien”, pp. 99–123; cf. Hans Weiler, “Entscheidung des OLG. Linz vom 2.2.1961, 1 Nc 49/59,” *Juristische Blätter*, 84:7/8 (1962), 199–203. In Finsterer’s 1948 request to the PCIRO for support, Đonlagić is mentioned as a soldier of the Home Guard (*Domobran*, part of the regular army of the NDH). Zejna Livnjak from Tešanj, however (still alive at the time of writing), remembers Đonlagić’s “German uniform” when he visited home during the war (for this information I am grateful to Livnjak’s son-in-law, Husein Galijašević). These circumstances, as well as his presence in Vienna, suggest that Đonlagić was a soldier in the 369th Infantry Division deployed in Stockerau.

46 The minutes of the community’s general meeting in October 1943 state that 73 of 124 members were present: “Abschrift des Protokolls der Generalversammlung” [Transcript of the minutes of the general meeting], 31 October 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 40.

47 In connection with the flight of community members to Salzburg (and Carinthia) at the end of the war, Gazija mentions his companion Asim Mahmutović from Travnik, who studied oriental studies in Vienna (and died in an accident near Heiligenblut c. 1945); Viennese physician Ejub Džino; and Yugoslav journalist and former deputy Omer Kajmaković. The latter two were probably members of the Viennese community at the end of the war. The minutes of the community meeting of 31 October 1943 state that a “Kajmaković” was present; for more on Kajmaković, see his obituary by: Haris Korkut, “Povodom Nekrologa Omeru Kajmakoviću”, in *Bosanski pogledi: nezavisni list muslimana Bosne i Hercegovine u iseljeništvu, 1960-1967*, Adil Zulfikarpašić (ed.) (London: STAMACO, 1984), p. 398. The minutes also mention a “Zubcevic”; this was probably Sead “Ado” Zubčević, who was born in 1921, and married psychiatrist Emira Denišlić (born in 1919). Gazija met them both in Heiligenblut (close

and identified the “Ustasha MERHENIĆ” (sic.) as the “leader of the Muslim group”.⁴⁸

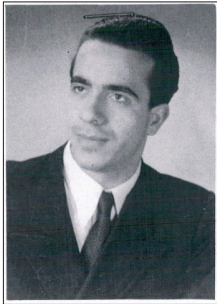


Figure. 3
Muhiddin Hećimović



Figure. 4
Smail Balić



Figure. 5
Fadil Merhemić



Figure. 6
Adem Handžić

to his own DP residence in Döllach): Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:18:19; Gazija, personal interview, 3 February 2020 (part 1/2), 00:16:40; see AS Registrations and emigration predominantly from Asian countries, IRO Individual Migration from Beirut March 1950, Sead and Emira Zubećević, 3.1.3.2/81740584/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives. Zubećević emigrated to Syria, and then – like several members of the Viennese community – to the Great Lakes (Columbus, Ohio). He participated in Bosnian Muslim community life in Chicago, and decades later cooperated with Balić journalistically. He also took part in the Meletta commemorations in Graz; Zulfić, *100 godina Bošnjaka u Čikagu*, p. 96; Zulfikarpašić (ed.), *Bosanski pogledi*, p. 6. Mustafa Imamović lists other Bosnian Muslim students in Vienna during the Second World War (probably based on Adil Zulfikarpašić; see: p. 78, fn 15): “Smail Balić, Fadil Mehmedagić, Esad Hrasnica, Fadil Merhemić, Kemal Fočo, Rašid Užičanin, Zijo Spaho, Abdulah Balagija, Ešref Avdagić, [Salih] Salko Šahinagić”, along with “Muhidin Hećimović” and “Asim Mahmutović”, whose peer Medžid Šahinović (Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, p. 292) is said to have been working at the Croatian consulate in Vienna at the time: Imamović, *Bošnjaci u emigraciji*, pp. 92-3. For the sake of completeness: Husein Gradašević studied law in Vienna and Innsbruck from 1941 to 1945, and was involved with Balić and Jami’at al Islam from 1958 onwards, and in the founding and management of the Muslim Social Service; CM/1 Files, Personal Questionnaire, Husein Gradasevic, 1960, 3.2.2.1/81394665, and ICEM Files, Refugee/Migrant Registration, Husein Gradasevic, 1959, 3.2.2.1/81394666/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives; Pintz, “Vom Moslemischen Sozialdienst zur Islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft”, p. 132.

48 Bogat, “Podatci o hrvatskim studentima u Beču”, 29 October 1943, sheet 2. Membership in the Ustasha Youth was compulsory for all members of youth and student organisations, and probably also for those who held scholarships from the *Narodna uzdanica* and its associated Croatian academic club *Musa Ćazim Ćatić* in Zagreb. This was the case for Merhemić and Balić: Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941-1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), p. 90. Balić was, however, at some point ideologically involved, as evidenced in a Croatian student publication from July 1942 (Balić, “Dva Istoka u Hrvatskoj”, in *Zbornik hrvatskih sveučilištaraca*, Marko Čović et al. [ed.] [Zagreb: Naklada Matice Hrvatske, 1942], pp. 7–12). In it, he attempted a philosophical rapprochement of “Muslim Croats” as bearers of a positive East (as opposed to the negative East of Byzantium, Serbs, and Jews) to the new Croatia. See also: Ivo Goldstein, “Ustaška ideologija o Hrvatima muslimanske vjere i odgovor u časopisu Handžar”, *RADOVI - Zavod za hrvatsku povijest*, 38 (2006), 269-70. In the interests of fairness, the text was likely written prior to a personal inner turning point, which already must have taken place in 1941/1942, since in Vienna he opposed the NDH with the other Muslim students. According to a UDB memo from 1954, Balić backed away from NDH goals and policies not only in Vienna, but already in 1941, when he showed tendencies that questioned his commitment to the regime. After a futile attempt to recruit the only informal autonomist organisation *Mladi Muslimani* (Young Muslims, which turned out to be anti-Ustasha) to the Ustasha cause, he himself got closer to it and tried to mediate its association registration with the NDH authorities. The registration was refused, because Ustasha youth was the only youth organisation permitted in the NDH: Ivan Ejub Kostić, “Osnivanje organizacije Mladi muslimani i njen razlaz sa ilmijskim udruženjem el Hidaeje 1943. godine”, *Tokovi istorije: časopis Instituta za noviju istoriju*, no. 2 (2023), 148-9 (fn 38).



Figure. 7
The *Hochhaus* in Vienna

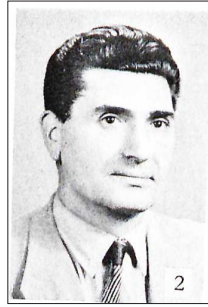


Figure. 8
Mehmed Maslić



Figure. 9
Zijah Spaho



Figure. 10
Salih Šahinagić



Figure. 11
Muhammed Pilav



Figure. 12
Hamida Murat-khan
(Akmüt)

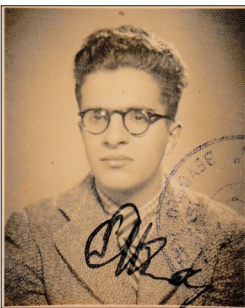


Figure. 13
Arif Abdulhafiz Akmüt

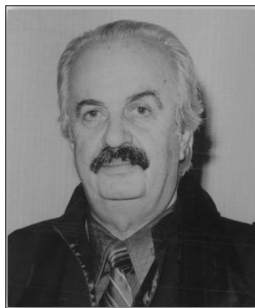


Figure. 14
Merih Odman



Figure. 15
Ahmed Balagija

Foundation

The decision to establish the community was finally made on 23 December 1942, at the *Ausländerdienst* (Foreigners' Service) at *Johannesgasse 4* (today: Metro cinema), on the occasion of an Eid celebration (*Bajram-Fest*)⁴⁹. The minutes refer to it as a *muslimanische religiöse Gemeinde* (Muslim religious community) or *muslimanische Gemeinde* (Muslim community).⁵⁰ The circle of participating Muslims went beyond Bosnian students, to include:

Croatian soldiers and the wounded, other Croatian workers and students as well as students, merchants and representatives of other vocational classes from Turkey, Persia, Arabia and other neighbouring countries.⁵¹

To confirm the decision some of those present were listed as signatories, with their addresses (as spelt in the document): Enes Prcic, Zijah Spaho, Ahmed Jusuf, Ali Ekber, Mahmut Ibrahim,⁵² Izzet Gör, Hamid[a] Akmut,⁵³ Arif Abdulhafiz Akmut,⁵⁴ Raif Sarica, Ergun Ulug, Dr. Merih Odman,⁵⁵ Husein Topraglu, Osman

49 Hećimović et al to Reichsstatthalterei Wien, 8 February 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 2.

50 The form "*muslimanisch*" (Bosnian: *muslimanska*), which is unorthodox in German, may refer to the Bosnian speaking background of the main actors and the minute-taker. Gazija remembered the community in connection with the period around the end of the Second World War as the "Bosnian community" (*bosanska općina*); Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:13:35.

51 "Protokoll aufgenommen am 23. Dezember 1942" [Minutes taken on 23 December 1942], WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheets 3-4.

52 Most likely Mahmut Ibrahim-Volić, born in 1898 and died in 1979 in Vienna (buried at the Vienna Central Cemetery: gate 3, group 25, row 3, no. 35). Ibrahim-Volić remained in Balić's circle after the war, and was a member and sponsor of the Muslim Social Service, founded by Balić in 1962; *Der gerade Weg*, new series 4(3):4 (1970), 4 and 4:5 (1970), 7.

53 Hamida Murat-khan (née Hamide Akmut) was born in Blumau near Vienna in 1920, and died in Lahore in 1998. She was the only woman listed by name among the community's founders, although the document incorrectly gives her a male first name. Her parents were Abdulhafiz Malwada Akmut (who came from Lahore but was a Turkish citizen) and Anna Maria Nimmerichter, from Austria. Before coming to Vienna in 1941, Murat-khan graduated from the German School of Istanbul. From 1942, she studied medicine in Vienna, and after the war worked in Salzburg as a surgical nurse and midwife, then in Hallein (Salzburg) as an assistant doctor. While in Germany, she married Nasreddin Murat-khan (architect of the Minar-e-Pakistan Tower), with whom she emigrated to Lahore.

54 Arif Abdulhafiz Akmut was Hamida's brother. He was born in Vienna in 1921, and died in Karachi in 1977. He studied chemistry in Vienna during the war, and spent his early post-war years in Austria's US zone. He then spent some time in Zurich, before commuting between London and Pakistan, and eventually becoming a Pakistani diplomat. He was a co-founder of the Pakistan People's Party, and wrote *Challenge to Poverty* (Karachi: Vision Publications, 1970). I thank Meral Murat-khan and Nilofar Akmut (and their relatives), the respective daughters of Hamida and Arif, for photographs of, and information about, their parents.

55 Merih Odman was born in 1918 and died in 2004. After the war he became a professor of rehabilitation and physiotherapy at the Istanbul Medical Faculty, and was a founder of the Turkish Society for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation (*Türkiye Fizikoterapi ve Rehabilitasyon Cemiyeti*) in 1958; <https://www.tftr.org.tr/tarihce>, accessed 25 January 2022. As a result of the 1960 coup, Odman was named among the "147" politically undesirable faculty members at Turkish universities, and lost his academic position that year; see the ordinance and list of 27 and 28 October 1960 in:

Jasaragic, Hamza Chureki,⁵⁶ Dr. Mussa Mudarry,⁵⁷ Kemal Foco, Muhamed Pilav,⁵⁸ Salih Sahinagic, Nuriya Sinanovic,⁵⁹ and Muhiddin Hecimovic. Others listed as present included representatives from the consulates of “Japan, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, etc., as well as representatives of the political and administrative authorities in Vienna”⁶⁰.

The minutes further state that Nuriya Sinanović, the military imam from Stockerau, was unanimously elected “imam of the Viennese Muslim community”. In the foundation notification of 8 February 1943 “To the Reichsstatthaltereie as the [competent] agency for religious matters,” the “Islamic religious community for Vienna” (*islamitische Kultusgemeinde für Wien*) named Muhiddin Hećimović, Kemal Fočo and Adem Handžić as “elected board members”, in addition to the imam. All four were signatories to the document.⁶¹ Hećimović is marked separately both in the notification and in the minutes itself, which emphasises his role as the main proponent, and the community’s authorised recipient. Apart from the imam, he is the only one mentioned by name in press reports, which suggest that the community was founded on his initiative. In a speech at Eid celebration he spoke

[...] about the inner structure of Islam and about the meaning of the Beiram feast itself, which is a feast of sacrifices, for which the Muslim has to sacrifice part of his wealth to Islamic care every year [... and...] at the same time called on

https://web.archive.org/web/20140101072250/http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc043/kanunmbkc043/kanunmbkc04300114.pdf, accessed 25 January 2022.

- 56 Elsewhere in the file he is called Hamza Choueki; see also: “Šuwaiki, Hamza” in Gerhard Höpp, *Texte aus der Fremde: Arabische politische Publizistik in Deutschland, 1896-1945: eine Bibliographie* (Berlin: Verlag Das Arabische Buch 2000), p. 87.
- 57 Höpp, *Texte aus der Fremde*, p. 64; and Mussa Mudarry, “Das Ergebnis einer statistischen Zusammenstellung über die Lokalisation von extragenitalen Metastasen beim Uteruscollumcarcinom” (Dissertation, Medical Faculty, University of Vienna, 1943).
- 58 Muhamed Pilav was born in Foča (Bosnia) in 1907, and died in Sarajevo in 1999. He was a functionary of the Croatian Peasant Party, and was initially close to the Ustasha in their Italian exile. After criticising their genocidal intentions towards the Serbs, however, he was deported to the Jasenovac concentration camp when the movement came to power. After being transferred to the Austrian camp in Heiligenkreuz/Helenental, he escaped to Vienna in 1942. Despite his imprisonment at Jasenovac, Yugoslavia accused him of collaborating with the Germans, and imprisoned him from 1947 to 1951 before giving him amnesty. He returned to Austria in 1953, where he was active with the remaining Muslim group centred around Smail Balić. In 1957 he was the main founder of the Austrian section of San Francisco-based international organisation *Jami’at al Islam*, but soon withdrew from its work because of his concerns about its intentions and possible intelligence background. Later, he became a member of Balić’s Muslim Social Service, before returning to Yugoslavia in 1977: Pilav, *U ustaškoj emigraciji*.
- 59 Nuriya Sinanović was born c. 1913 in Miljanovac (near Zvornik, Bosnia). He graduated from the Higher Islamic Sharia Theological College in Sarajevo in 1934, and then worked as an intern at a Sharia court; *Spomenica Šerijatske sudačke škole u Sarajevu (1887-1937)* (Sarajevo: Islamska Dionička Štamparija, 1937), p. 90.
- 60 “Protokoll”, 23 December 1942, sheets 3-4.
- 61 The Foreigners’ Service at *Johannesgasse 4* (with the phone number “R 20286” handwritten next to it) was given as the community’s provisional address: Hećimović et al. to Reichsstatthaltereie Wien, 8 February 1943, sheet 2; see also: Wiener Verkehrs-Verein (ed.), *Ratgeber für die Besucher der Mozartwoche des Deutschen Reiches in Wien, 28. November bis 5. Dezember 1941* (Vienna: self-published, 1941), p. 14.

the Muslims who took part in the festivity to unite into an Islamite community [*islamitischen Gemeinde*], so that Vienna would soon have a well-organised Islamite community [*islamitische Gemeinde*] again^{62, 63}

The reports in all the newspapers from 25 December 1942 contained essentially the same text, (down to the misspelling of “Mikiddin Hecimovic” [sic.]), apart from a few minor editorial changes (e.g., the spelling of *Bejram/Beiram*, *Muselmanen/Muslimanen* and *Moslimen/Moslims*). The text therefore most likely came from a single central non-Muslim source outside the newspapers, who knew Hećimović superficially at best, which for some reason had an interest in the affirmation of the Viennese Muslims.

The search for suspects is not difficult; after the administrative procedure to confirm the foundation notification was delayed until May 1943, Viennese municipal official Maximilian Hölzel⁶⁴ sent vice mayor Hanns Blaschke (responsible for the department of culture)⁶⁵ a letter marked “Confidential!” and “Urgent!” on 19 May. In it, he states that although he organised the Eid celebration in agreement with him, Blaschke, and the Reich propaganda department, the Muslims used this opportunity to establish an Islamic community, which “given the policy intended regarding global Islam” was “received with applause” “by the Reich propaganda department as well as by other relevant authorities”. He says to have received the “petition addressed to the Reichsstatthalterei” (i.e., the foundation notification) “with attached minutes” from the Muslims, to be forwarded to the *Reichsstatthalterei*. He notes with urgency that the Muslims are “already beginning to interpret [the remaining settlement] as a political unfriendliness towards Islam”. Next to this manually underlined passage is the

62 This indicates that Hećimović and the group around him were aware that Islamic community life in Vienna existed before them, either in the *Islamischer Kulturbund* or Viennese organisational structures within the monarchy. Zijah Spaho was, after all, the son of one of the founders of *Zvijezda*, the Vienna’s first Muslim association (see fn 44).

63 “Muselmanen feierten das Bejramfest – Feierstunde in der Johannesgasse”, *Das kleine Volksblatt*, 25 December 1942, p. 5; “Moslemin feierten in Wien das Beiramfest”, *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 25 December 1942, p. 8; “Muslimanen feierten das Bejramfest”, *Wiener Kronen-Zeitung*, 25 December 1942, p. 7; “Muslimanen feiern Bejram”, *Kleine Volks-Zeitung*, 25 December 1942, p. 7. It might be noteworthy that Balić kept a cutout of the article from the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* in his literary estate; “Muslimani u Austriji”, Bosniak Institute - Adil Zulfikarpašić Foundation (Sarajevo), Smail Balić Arhive 3-VI-2, sheet 1.

64 Maximilian Hölzel was born in Sarajevo in 1887 to Austrian colonists. He was a free corps leader in a Bosnian Pandur volunteer troop on the Drina river (in eastern Bosnia) during the First World War, which experience he expressed in his novels *Bosnische Wölfe* (Bosnian Wolves, 1938) and *Balkan in Flammen* (Balkan in Flames, 1939). From 1918, he worked as secretary and south-east consultant for the cultural department of the municipality of Vienna. In his memoir, Pilav states that Hölzel stayed in Vienna at the end of the war, and was arrested by the Soviets as a result of allegations made by Serbs regarding his two books. Pilav suspects he was taken “to Siberia”, after which nothing more was heard from him: Mirjana Stančić, *Verschüttete Literatur: Die deutschsprachige Dichtung auf dem Gebiet des ehemaligen Jugoslawien von 1800 bis 1945* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), p. 133; Pilav, *U ustaškoj emigraciji*, p. 87; and “Maximilian Hölzel”, *Kärntner Volkszeitung und Heimatblatt*, 4 November 1939, p. 7.

65 Hölzel to Blaschke, 19 May 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 15.

handwritten note “Mufdi – Verdienste!” (sic.), literally “Mufti – Merits!” This will be discussed further on subsequent pages.⁶⁶

Hölzel’s role is clear from the address and phone number of his department – Johannesgasse 4, R 20286⁶⁷ – which are the same as those of the Foreigners’ Service (see fn 61) and the Islamic community. In one of its confidential reports (from October 1943) on Croatian students, the NDH secret police states that the Muslims in Vienna are “gathering around MAXIMILIAN HÖLZEL”, that “their ideology is the autonomy of Bosnia”, and that they are strongly supported “by the aforementioned HÖLZEL [...] but also by others like Dr. RONNENBERG, a university professor who is considered to be the official representative and mediator of Viennese policy towards Croatia”.⁶⁸ Muhamed Pilav, who escaped from the camp in Heiligenkreuz (see fn 58) and was a founding member of the community, mentions in his memoirs that he met and got to know Hölzel in Vienna, presumably in one of the cafés frequented by Yugoslavs that he names previously. Hölzel brought him to Blaschke, to whom he told his life story, and who subsequently arranged an alien passport for him.⁶⁹

This raises the questions: What was behind Hölzel and Blaschke’s efforts to help Viennese Muslims; Who was “Ronneberger” (sic.) in this context; and what did a mufti have to do with them all? To understand the answers, knowledge is required of Balkan and National Socialist policies on Islam, and Muslim aspirations for autonomy in Bosnia, both of which were present in Vienna. The connection between them is evident in a Bosnian article by Smail Balić in November 1942, in which he refers to the growing attention of the German public to the political importance of Islam and Muslims. In particular, he points to Franz Ronneberger,⁷⁰ whom he describes as “one of the politically most influential people in Austria”,⁷¹ and to his article published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, which Balić quotes extensively, and in which Ronneberger emphasises the political importance of Muslims in the Balkans for the Reich:

66 These initial discrepancies are the first indication that the goals of the active Viennese Muslims in the establishment of the community were different to those of government protagonists, and that the latter probably suspected this quite early on.

67 Hölzel to Eberstaller, 9 April 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 9.

68 Bogat, “Podatci o hrvatskim studentima u Beču”, 29 October 1943, sheet 2.

69 Pilav, *U ustaškoj emigraciji*, pp. 86-7.

70 Ronneberger was a lawyer and social scientist, who from 1940 researched Southeast Europe, and taught at the *Hochschule für Welthandel* (today: Vienna University of Economics and Business). Under the patronage of the Foreign Office he established the so-called *Dienststelle Dr. Ronneberger* (Department of Dr. Ronneberger) in Vienna, which focused on south-eastern Europe and intelligence. Motadel, *Islam*, pp. 34-5; see also: Peer Heinelt, “Portait eines Schreibtischtäters: Franz Ronneberger (1913-1999)”, in *Die Spirale des Schweigens: Zum Umgang mit der nationalsozialistischen Zeitungswissenschaft*, Wolfgang Duchkowitsch et al. (ed.) (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2004), pp. 193-217.

71 Smail Balić, “Unutarnje i vanjsko značenje Islama u Europi”, *Osvit*, 22 November 1942, no. 39, p. 2.

In Croatia and Bulgaria almost two million people avow themselves to Islam. However, it would be a mistake to draw conclusions about the actual importance of European Muslims for the Islamic world from the numerical ratio. Everything that is going on in the Moslem ethnic groups of Croatia and Bulgaria is carefully registered and observed by the rest of Mohammedanism.⁷²

In other words: Nazi Germany's Islam policy, which aimed to entice Muslims around the world to become wartime allies against the Allied Forces, depended – according to Ronneberger – on Muslim-related policy in the Balkans. This can not only be seen in the Reich's relations with Al-Husseini; current developments in Bosnia maybe contributed even more to Ronneberger's conclusion. With the Serb Chetnik massacre of Muslim civilians in eastern Bosnia (particularly in Foča and Višegrad) in summer 1942 – which was seen as a consequence of the Ustasha's crimes against Serbs, and was condemned by leading Muslims –⁷³ the call for the formation of Bosnian Muslim units and political autonomy grew louder. On 26 August 1942, under the chairmanship of the acting Reis-ul-Ulema (Salih-Safvet Bašić), a Muslim coalition for “national salvation” was formed in Sarajevo, which blamed the Croatian leadership for the massacres, and appealed to the Germans, Al-Husseini, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Britain, America and the Soviets for help.⁷⁴

In an anonymously authored memorandum by a self-proclaimed “People's Committee” (but without naming the authors)⁷⁵ addressed to Hitler and dated 1 November 1942, the formation of a “Bosnian Guard” and an autonomous “Bosnian Province”⁷⁶ under German protection was finally proposed.⁷⁷ The formation of the 13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS *Handschar* was the

72 Franz Ronneberger, “Der Islam im Antlitz Europas”, *Völkischer Beobachter*, 23 October 1942, no. 296, p. 3; see also: Stefan Petke, “Militärische Vergemeinschaftungsversuche Muslimischer Soldaten in der Waffen-SS: Die Beispiele der Division ‘Handschar’ und des ‘Osttürkischen Waffenverbands der SS,’” in *Die Waffen-SS*, Jan Erik Schulte et al. (ed.) (Brill-Schöningh, 2014), p. 249 (fn 10).

73 Hikmet Karčić et al. (ed.), *The Muslim Resolutions: Bosniak Responses to World War Two Atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: Center for Islam in the Contemporary World, 2021); Marko Attila Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2013), pp. 51-2.

74 Vladimir Dedijer and Antun Miletić, *Genocid nad Muslimanima 1941.-1945.* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1990), pp. 205–9; and Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims*, p. 51.

75 According to German consul Erich Gördes, these were Uzeir Hadžihasanović, Mustafa Softić and Suljaga Salihagić. Bougarel considers Salihagić, who studied in Vienna during the Austro-Hungarian period, to be the author of the document (Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 680-689), while Tomasevich, citing Karl von Krempler, believes it was Muhamed Pandža (a member of the Ulema-Medžlis, the highest Islamic body in Bosnia): Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, p. 495 (fn 69).

76 This was followed by the conveyance of non-Muslim majority border areas to Croatia, Italy and Montenegro.

77 Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 662. This was preceded by an October appeal from leading Bosnian Muslims to Italy to annex Bosnia, and thereby persuade it to act against the Chetniks in the country's east. This appeal was not fulfilled. Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, p. 495 (fn 69).

National Socialists' de facto response, even if it did not ultimately correspond to the ideas of the Muslim leadership in Bosnia.

The proposal did, however, fit Ronneberger's National Socialist Balkan policy, which envisioned new demarcations based on ethnic criteria.⁷⁸ In 1943, Murat Bajrović (first a confidante of the NDH in Sandžak, and later Hadžialić's rival in the Viennese community elections in October 1943) completed a dissertation at Vienna's *Hochschule für Welthandel* (today: Vienna University of Economics and Business) under Ronneberger's supervision, which provided a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the formation of an autonomous Bosnia.⁷⁹ According to the National Socialists in charge, the Bosnian Muslim students in Vienna were assigned the role of multipliers, recruiting young Muslims and creating a favourable mood for the soon-to-be-created "Muslim" Waffen SS division.⁸⁰

A confidential NDH secret police report from 19 July 1943, sent to the NDH foreign ministry, bears witness to this: it states that on 23 June 1943, Bosnian Muslim students from Vienna, Berlin, and other German university cities met in Vienna when new NDH government orders were given regarding the completion of military service. Nedim Salihbegović⁸¹ and Jusuf Okić⁸² were

78 Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 1122.

79 Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 1153; Murat Bajrović, "Land und Leute Bosniens: wirtschaftliche Untersuchungen" (Dissertation, Hochschule für Welthandel, Vienna 1943).

80 Bougarel states that the division journal *Handžar* was distributed among Muslim students in Vienna (Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 6856 [fn 58]). Although conceivable and not quite implausible, this is not mentioned in the sources he cites.

81 Nedim Salihbegović, born in Sarajevo in 1919, was also an economics student at the *Narodna uzdanica* boarding home in Zagreb. Pilav (see fn 58) remembers him as a "long since disappointed" Ustasha, who had warned him that he would be arrested by the Ustasha and deported to the Jasenovac concentration camp (Pilav, *U ustaškoj emigraciji*, p. 56). In 1941, Salihbegović was sent to Berlin as Deputy Rapporteur of the NDH embassy (*Hasanbegović*, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 124, 216). His possible membership of the Handschar Division is discussed in the literature: among Himmler's documents is a *Bericht zur Lage* (Situation Report) from 25 September 1943, with the transcribed signature "Salihbegović SS" (sic.). The report critically assesses the Waffen SS recruitment policy with regard to Bosnian Muslims after the uprising in Villefranche-de-Rouergue (BArch NS 19/2601, pp. 29-32). For the discussion, see: Mirko D. Grmek and Louise L. Lambrichs, *Les Révoltés de Villefranche: Mutinerie d'un Bataillon de Waffen-SS à Villefranche-de-Rouergue, Septembre 1943* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), p. 270; Sulejmanpašić, *Handžar*, p. 188 (fn 88); and Husnija Kamberović, "Mirko D. GRMEK, Louise L. LAMBRICHs, Buntovnici iz Villefranchea. Pobuna jednog bataljona SS trupa septembra 1943. Sarajevo – ArmisPrint, 2005, 509 str. (prijevod s Francuskog Nermina Štraus) – Riječ na promociji u Hrvatskom Institutu za Povijest, održanoj 13. veljače 2006. u Zagrebu," *Prikazi*, 38: 1 (2006), 336. Note Salihbegović's presence among the Handschar Division in Fig. 2. See also: Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 124 and 216. In 1945, he was among the Muslim DPs in Salzburg (Registration Lists of DP Camps, ICRC Geneva/Salzburg office, La liste des réfugiés musulmans en Salzburg, 6 August 1945, 3.1.1.2/82047752-82047754/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives). Salihbegović emigrated to Argentina in 1948, and only returned to Bosnia in 1995, for the last years of his life.

82 Jusuf Okić was born in Jajce (Bosnia) in 1916. He studied law in Zagreb before the war, and stayed at the *Narodna uzdanica* boarding home. Before the establishment of the NDH, and before he left for Berlin, he worked for the Ustasha in Sarajevo and Jajce. He went to Berlin on a scholarship from the NDH Foreign Ministry (*Hasanbegović*, *Muslimani u Zagrebu*, pp. 124 and 213). At the end of the war, he stayed with the Muslim DPs in Salzburg (Registration Lists of DP Camps, La liste des réfugiés musulmans en Salzburg, 6 August 1945, 3.1.1.2/82047752-4/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives).

mentioned as participants from Berlin. At this meeting, it was decided “that not a single Muslim student will go to the Croatian ‘Home Guard’, and in particular not to the Ustasha formations, but that they will all go to the SS troops”. Salihbegović explains that “he cannot serve with those who could be tried for banditry”, but that in the SS troops “there are people who understand them and so the Muslims will be able to defend their lives and their interests”.⁸³ The document also states that the SS leadership granted the Muslim students an exemption until they completed their studies.

The report criticises the fact that Croats were referred to as “them” (meaning that the participants did not see themselves as Croats) at the meeting; that they were blamed for having seduced the Muslims; and that “they wanted to get rid of the Serbs with the help of the Muslims, but then when the Serbs were done, it would be the Muslims’ turn”. It further complains that the Muslim students maintained relationships with their Serbian counterparts, of whom there were said to have been 100 in Vienna at the time. The meeting was organised by the Viennese Muslims under the leadership of Bajrović, whom the document accuses of being “particularly active in working against everything Croatian”.⁸⁴

Conflict of interest between students and the government

None of the original core group from the Viennese community are mentioned as being present at the June 1943 meeting, while Bajrović played no role in Gazija’s memories. Gazija knew Hadžialić from the Wilmersdorf Mosque in Berlin, but not from Vienna (although the former lived and worked there from early 1944). According to the association’s minutes, however, at the end of 1943 Bajrović and Hadžialić are presented as central figures, and the main candidates for the community’s future leadership. This raises the question: Why did the founders take a back seat?

The document on the decision to permit the founding of the community (now renamed *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien*, at the authorities’ instigation)⁸⁵ from

83 In retrospect, this view of the planned SS unit may seem preposterous. It should be borne in mind, however, that nostalgia and positive Bosniak associations with the Bosnian regiments of the Austro-Hungarian army were played upon, and the unit was misrepresented as following the Austro-Hungarian military tradition (George Lepre, *Himmler’s Bosnian Division* [Atglen: Schiffer, 1997], pp. 18, 20, 47, 52 and 125).

84 Damić to Budak, “Muslimani sveučilištarci u Beču” [Muslim students in Vienna], 19 July 1943, no. V.T. 328, V.T./5795/5/1943, Arhiv oružanih snaga, Belgrade, NDH fund, box 256, fasc. 8, doc. 16, sheet 2 (pp. 1-2).

85 The instruction came directly from the party chancellery in Berlin, with the reasoning that “the word ‘municipality’ is undesirable from a political denominational point of view, since the term ‘municipality’ should only be understood to mean the municipality in the sense of the German Municipal Code”; Birk to Eberstaller, 4 June 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 18.

21 June 1943 was addressed to Hećimović as the main proponent.⁸⁶ Conflicts had, however, already broken out between the original founders, especially Hećimović, and their political contacts. While doubts about granting the community the (at least theoretically) independent status of a religious community (*Kultusgemeinde*)⁸⁷ arose in the *Reichsstatthaltereis*' first internal memo from 18 February of the same year,⁸⁸ this uneasiness became evident when the procedure was disproportionately delayed,⁸⁹ leading to complaints from the Muslims.



Figure 16. The Berlin (Wilmersdorf) Mosque in 1942. Gazija is seated in the middle; Hadžialić is standing behind him on the left; and Asim Mahmutović is on the right, in the white coat (see fn 47).

86 *Bescheid* [administrative decision], 21 June 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 17.

87 As outlined under the Recognition Act (*Anerkennungsgesetz*) of 1874, RGBl. [Imperial Law Gazette] no. 68/1874. Within Nazi Germany's political framework, the formal position of recognised churches and religious societies and their congregations being independent of the state was of questionable value. It is likely, however, that the parity it entailed and the precedent effect of potential action against a community of the legally recognised Islamic religious society would have caused unrest among legally recognised churches. In this context of legal appearance and interests, it could still be assumed that a religious community had more security than a registered association.

88 Memorandum for a file of the Reichsstatthaltereis Wien, 18 February 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 1.

89 The founding was reported to the Reichsstatthaltereis Wien in a letter dated 8 February 8 1943, which was received on 16 February (Hećimović et al. to Reichsstatthaltereis Wien, 8 February 1943, sheet 2).

The aforementioned confidential letter from Hölzel to Blaschke of 19 May 1943, in which the former reports that “the Muslims keep coming to ask for a settlement and the lack of it is already beginning to be interpreted as political unfriendliness towards Islam”, and the note “Mufdi – Verdienste!” (“Mufti – Merits!”) next to it, point to more serious doubts from the Viennese authorities about the loyalty of the leading group of the city’s Muslim students. Finally, Al-Husseini visited Vienna from 12-14 April on his way back from the Balkans, where he had been campaigning in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Zagreb for the future 13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS. He was received in Vienna by the *Reichsstatthalter* Baldur von Schirach,⁹⁰ and met representatives of the Islamic community,⁹¹ presumably with the expectation that he would convince the Viennese students to follow the Nazis’ plans, as he had tried to do in Bosnia.

The students, however, seem to have been primarily interested in founding the Islamic community, probably because pressure from the NDH leadership regarding military service was increasing, and because they needed an organisation that supported the continuation of their studies, in case the goodwill of the Viennese authorities were to end. The draft bylaws of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Berlin*, which provided for the establishment of “a student residence and a library”, were adopted by the Islamic community,⁹² giving it the added function of a Muslim student association.

It is this point, however, that was taken up by the Viennese authorities and the NSDAP in Berlin, to justify categorising the organisation as a registered association instead of a religious community, and thereby subjecting it to greater government dependence. They could do so because

[...] the application of the Association Act [*Vereinsgesetz 1867*] should be justified by the fact that the religious community should not have denominational significance [only], but should [also] serve to cultivate academic endeavours beyond the framework of a religious society.⁹³

90 “Reichsleiter Baldur von Schirach, Vermerk, SS-Standartenführer Bock, Großmufti von Palästina, Besuch der Staatsoper, Wien 07.04.43, gez. Generalkulturreferent Walter Thomas”; Private Archive Wolfgang G. Schwanitz (PArchWGS); see also: Christian Reder, *Deformierte Bürgerlichkeit* (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2016), p. 149.

91 Berger to Himmler, “Reise des Groß-Mufti von Palästina”, 19 April 1943, BArch NS 19/2255, p. 3 (2); via Motadel, *Islam*, p. 193 (fn 58). Contrary to Motadel’s assumption, Hadžialić was by no means the leader of the community at that time (April 1943), and was not even in Vienna – he did not become chairman until the end of October, and then under dubious circumstances (“Abschrift des Protokolls”, 31 October 1943, sheets 38-41). Bougarel’s assumption that Hadžialić was president of the community in December 1942 is therefore also erroneous (Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 2779).

92 Bylaws of the “Islamische Gemeinde zu Berlin (E.V. 1922)”, WStLA, M.Abt. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 10. Section 11 provided for membership cards, but whether any were ever issued is questionable, as none have been found or referenced.

93 Birk to Eberstaller, 4 June 1943, sheet 18. The corresponding legal absurdities, formal flaws and unintended legal consequences are discussed in: Dautović “40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien”, pp. 107 and 109-10.

This means that what should have been the organisational basis for the students' hope of escaping wartime hostilities was subject to the will of the Viennese authorities, and provided no legal or factual security. This was confirmed by the early (and likely foreseeable) appointment of new (more obedient) individuals to the community's leadership.

Whatever happened during Al-Husseini's visit to Vienna in April 1943 seems to have caused Hećimović to seriously doubt that the Islamic community would give them the security they hoped for. Soon afterwards, on 28 April 1943 (almost two months before the administrative decision on the community), he initiated the founding of another organisation: the Islamic Academic Association (*Islamisch-Akademischer Verein*).⁹⁴ This initiation did not come directly from Hećimović, but from the district student leadership of Vienna (*Gaustudentenführung Wien*).⁹⁵ Hećimović is mentioned only in forms from 4 May (as "prospective chairman"⁹⁶ of the association), and 18 May (as its founding proponent).⁹⁷ The bylaws themselves seem to have been added only on the latter date.

This suggests that the four-week disallowance period (until 26 May) should have been set in motion with the founding notification. After this, the association would have been legally considered to have come into being, while its purpose, structure (bylaws), and especially the main proponent should have been made known to the authorities as late as possible. Hećimović must therefore have been aware since April that officials were concerned by the students' motives, and by him as their representative, and considered them problematic. On 25 May, however, the authority ordered the disallowance period to run until 23 June, as it was awaiting approval from the NSDAP's *Gauleiter*.⁹⁸

On 21 June, two days before this period expired, the *Reichsstatthalterei* received a letter from Hölzel in which he spoke out against the admission of the association, on the grounds that

The sphere of activity of the "Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien" [... is] so complete and all-encompassing [...] that it does not seem necessary that an "Academic Association" should also be set up for it, because it would not have any other cultural work program than that of the "Islamische Gemeinschaft".⁹⁹

The authority finally prohibited the founding of the association, using Hölzel's reasoning, but a more specific concern emerges from his remarks: i.e.: the association

94 Note the similarity in name to *Islamitisch akademischer Verein "Zvijezda"*; see also: fn 62.

95 Hoffer to Reichsstatthalterei Wien, 28 April 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 963/1943, sheet 1.

96 Reichsstatthalterei Wien, "Bildung", 4 April 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 963/1943, sheet 14.

97 Reichsstatthalterei Wien, "Bildung", 18 April 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 963/1943, sheet 16.

98 It was granted on June 16: Scharizer to Reichsstatthalter Wien, 16 June 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 963/1943, sheet 18.

99 Reichsstatthalterei Wien to Hećimović, "Bescheid", 15 September 1943, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 963/1943, sheet 23.

[...] claims [on behalf of] all Muslims, i.e. Turks, Arabs, Egyptians, Indians, Bosniaks, etc. [...] it could not offer us the guarantees that the “Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien” offers us regarding the use of the powers granted to it. The Academic Association would eventually come under the influence of internationally oriented Islamic students and its activities would become uncontrollable. The “Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien”, on the other hand, is nothing more than a parish set up according to ecclesiastical and civil laws, having an administration responsible to the state and to the Islamic community and having a military imam who enjoys our trust [...] Establishing a general “Islamic Academic Association”, on the other hand, does not appear to be necessary. Whether there would be a need to set up a national “Turkish Academic Association” is another question, because this Turkish association would not be a general Islamic association, but a national Turkish association.¹⁰⁰

This is given added relevance because National Socialist policy on Islam frequently pretended to support pan-Islamic tendencies.¹⁰¹ The present example shows that this was only really the case if they were dependent on, and in the interests of, National Socialism. The allusion to foreign Muslim students (i.e., those from countries not occupied by Axis powers), especially Turkish ones, gives the impression that Hölzel wanted to exclude the potential influence of independent states on general Islamic organisational life in Vienna.¹⁰²

This implies that when founding the association, Hećimović may have toyed with the idea of involving more students of other nationalities (especially Turkish) to attract consular protection from Turkey. If this was the case, Hölzel’s remarks may have alluded to such an intention when he mentions the possibility of a nationally homogeneous alternative for Turkish students, so as not to mar the activities of the Islamic community.¹⁰³

100 Hölzel to Eberstaller, 18 June 1943, WStLA, M.Abt. 119.A32, 963/1943, sheets 19-20.

101 Motadel, *Islam*, pp. 49, 50, 53 and 54.

102 At the Eid celebration initiated by Hölzel on 23 December 1942, at which the founding of the Islamic community was announced, representatives were present from the Japanese, Hungarian, Bulgarian and Romanian consulates, but not from the Turkish one, although Turkish students were among the participants. In this context, it should be borne in mind that Gottlob Berger (head of the SS main office), Karl-Gustav Sauberzweig (Commander of the Handschar Division) and Himmler were enthusiastic about Al-Husseini’s recruitment efforts, but this was not a universal view. Some pointed to Al-Husseini’s disloyalty to the Ottomans during the First World War, and consul Hans Alexander Winkler (a religious studies scholar who habituated on Islam) feared that Al-Husseini would pursue pan-Islamic goals with the Waffen SS division, thereby becoming an ally of Japan or the British; or that the division’s Bosniaks would side with Turkey were it to enter the war against the Axis powers: “An Professor Six, Politische Lage, der Besuch April 1943, Panislamische Kampftruppe, Konfliktfall Türkei, Teufelsdivision, Gefahrenmoment panislamischer Truppe, Berlin 04.05.43, gez. Konsul Winkler”, Politisches Archiv Auswärtiges Amt, Großmufti Bosnien, 69287, B00146, B00150; “Notizen über al-Husainis Gespräche, SS-Division soll panislamische Kampftruppe werden, Türken und Bosniaken, Großmufti als Kalif, Berlin 28.04.43, gez. Winkler”, Politisches Archiv Auswärtiges Amt, B168-175

103 The Association of Turkish Students was also in the process of being founded at this time; “Verein Türkischer Studenten”, WStLA, M.Abt. 119.A32, 999/1943.

Although these ideas are speculative, they are supported by the fact that Hećimović spoke Turkish,¹⁰⁴ and was in close contact with Turkish students. One of the NDH secret police reports notes that Hećimović told “a Turk around 15 August of this year that the ‘Croats’ slaughtered not less than 400,000 Muslims in Bosnia”, and went on to say that

Some Muslim students [... have] even gone so far as to get information from Turkish students, whether they could get permission from the Turkish consulate to emigrate permanently to Turkey.¹⁰⁵

Given that the report dates from 19 November 1943 – i.e., after both the installation of a politically acceptable community leadership and the failed attempt to found the Islamic Academic Association at the end of October that year – this was most likely a sign of the Muslim students’ desperation.

Before and after the official settlement regarding the *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien*¹⁰⁶ on 21 June 1943, some irregular changes appear in the association file that raise political and legal questions, and, unlike the founding notification, lack signatory evidence for the intention of all or most founding board members.¹⁰⁷ The community’s association file contains a standard notification form of the *Reichsstatthalterei* from 10 June, addressed to the Viennese section (*Gauleitung Wien*) of the NSDAP. The form informs the recipient that “Captain-Imam Nurija Sinanovic (contactable at III, Johannesg. 4, Foreigners’ Service)” notified the foundation of the (now explicit) association *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien* – the field for Sinanović’s notification date, however, is blank. At the end the *Reichsstatthalterei*’s notification gives the names and addresses of the other board members (Hećimović, Fočo, Handžić). There is, however, no trace of Sinanović’s notification in the association file and given the missing date, it is questionable whether it even existed and whether it ever constituted anything other than a legal pretence to approve an association instead of a *Kultusgemeinde*.

In a letter dated 19 July 1943, the members of the founding board are referred to as a “preliminary committee”. Adem Handžić is no longer named, but (without reference to an election) Hamza Choueki is listed alongside Sinanović, Hećimović and Fočo. The letter concerning the change, which originated again

104 Postwar Card File, DP Statistical Card, Hecimovic Muhiddin, 1950, 3.1.1.1/67329164/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives.

105 Rukavina to Perić, “Hrvatski sveučilištarcu u Beču”, 19 November 1943, sheet 5 (p. 2)

106 Strictly speaking, the name *Islamitische Gemeinschaft zu Wien* appears in the decision.

107 After the founding notification of February 1943, only Sinanović’s signature (and not those of the other founding members) appears on documents nominally sent from the community to the *Reichsstatthalterei*, until Hadžialić’s “election”. In a more harmonious context, this would not be significant, but given the conflict between Hećimović and the Viennese authorities, especially Hölzel, and the latter’s reference to Sinanović’s closeness to the authorities, documents issued after the founding notification must be read with caution.

at *Johannesgasse 4*, bears only Sinanović's signature.¹⁰⁸ According to Gazija, who does not remember Sinanović, the Muslim soldiers from the Stockerau barracks hardly took part in community life in Vienna, and played no significant role.¹⁰⁹ There is a clear discrepancy here in terms of orientation, activity and leadership between the actual community and its legal form, which was in the hands of the authorities (specifically: Hölzel).

Electoral coup

Prior to the general meeting at the end of October, the community made a few more attempts to reach all Muslims in the "Alps and Danube counties" (*Alpen- und Donaureichsgaue*). Newspaper advertisements were published, in which all Muslims were asked to contact them with postcards addressed to *Johannesgasse 4/I* with their personal data.¹¹⁰ Finally, on 1 October 1943, another *Beiram-Fest* was held at the Foreign Service, this time with an entertainment program.¹¹¹

We hear about Hadžialić only from a notification to the police chief of Vienna regarding the election results of the "First general meeting of the 'Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien'" of 31 October 1943,¹¹² and from the minutes of the general meeting,¹¹³ where he appears out of nowhere as "Chairman of the Preliminary

108 Sinanović to Reichsstattthaltereit Wien, 19 July 1943, WStLA, M.Abt. 119.A32.196/1943, sheet 27.

109 Gazija, personal interview, 3 February 2020 (part 1/2), 01:07:00.

110 "An die Muslimanen in Wien und Umgebung", *Kleine Volkszeitung*, 8 September 1943, p. 2.

111 The official notification (from 29 September 1943) for the planned celebration seems to have been signed by Sinanović in the abbreviated form ("Nur Sin"), unlike usual. It also differs substantially in style from his usual signature, as seen in other documents (the short signature is apparently based on the German Kurrent script, while Sinanović usually used modern cursive). The comparison to Hölzel's similarly curved official abbreviation is not far to seek, but of course it cannot replace a forensic handwriting comparison (Hölzel to Eberstaller, 9 April 1943, sheet 9; Hölzel to Blaschke, 19 May 1943, sheet 15). Sinanović's apparent absence from Vienna at this time may be explained militarily: as of September 1943, the capitulation of Italy and associated boost for the Partisans meant that the 369th (Croatian) Infantry Division was in intensive continuous action in north-eastern Bosnia (Schraml, *Kriegsschauplatz Kroatien*, pp. 68-9).

112 The notification was forwarded to the *Reichsstattthaltereit*, the responsible authority for association matters, along with an accompanying letter from the same day (Hadžialić to Reichsstattthalter Wien, 1 November 1943, WStLA M.Abt 119, A32, 196/1943, sheets 29-33).

113 Only Hadžialić and Hölzel authenticated the transcript of the minutes. Unlike the notification of the election results, the transcript is not added to the association file until 28 September 1944, i.e., almost a year later, when Hadžialić asked the *Reichsstattthaltereit* (on 13 September that year) for a confirmation of the transcript to open a postal savings account. This suggests that Hadžialić, as the association's representative, did not attend to ongoing association business for almost a year, and that his authority to represent the association/community may have been contested. Had this not been the case, he would have asked for confirmation of the election results without disclosing internal minutes. Throughout the transcript, the group is referred to as *Gemeinde* and not *Gemeinschaft*; *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien* is indicated only on a separate cover sheet and at the end of the minutes, retrospectively added by a stamp. This and the fact that members later remembered it only as the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* make it likely that ordinary community members never knew about the name change (and possibly the change in legal

Committee” and opens the meeting. No notification of his election/appointment as a member of the provisional committee, or as chairman, can be found in the file.

One of Hećimović’s complaints, mentioned in the minutes after the “election”, suggests there was a prior meeting about the preliminary committee:

[Hećimović] just asks why he, who was working much for the realization of the community, was portrayed as an adversary. He was, for instance, not elected to the preliminary committee on the grounds that he was not present at the time, whereas absentees¹¹⁴ were also elected to the main committee.¹¹⁵

This not only confirms the existence of a conflict regarding Hećimović, but also his expulsion from the leadership. The question of to whom this complaint was addressed can be answered by the fact that non-transparent changes to the composition of the preliminary committee (originating from *Johannessgasse 4* and signed by Sinanović) had already been made, and by the general course of the meeting.

Hadžialić opened the meeting and welcomed Hölzel as a representative of the cultural department, and Aribert Rauchfuss as a representative of the propaganda department, thereby indicating their presence at the outset. He then nominated Teufik Azabagić as moderator, a move that was accepted unanimously, and Azabagić immediately appeared on Hadžialić’s electoral list. Hećimović argued for a small committee; for each committee member to be elected separately; and for only a president to be elected in a leadership role. His suggestions were ignored, as seen in two electoral lists from Zubčević and Arif Akmut. The former (and prevailing) list was headed by Hadžialić, with:

Chalezky Bari,¹¹⁶ Omari Naim,¹¹⁷ Dr. Demir Zara, Jusuf Akmet, Osmanagic Omer, Konjhodzic Alija,¹¹⁸ Ali Ekber, Osmanagic Izet,

form) or the corresponding problems. The minute takers Zijah Spaho and Arif Akmut certainly were not aware of it.

114 This may refer to Adem Handžić, who, like Sinanović, would have been deployed in north-eastern Bosnia at the time, although his name was to appear on Hadžialić’s electoral list. He could, however, also have been in Germany (see fn 39). Unlike in those of 23 December 1942, there is no indication of the presence of soldiers in the minutes from 31 October 1943.

115 “Abschrift des Protokolls”, 31 October 1943, sheet 40.

116 Bari (Balys/Boris) Chalecki/Chalezki/Chaleckas was born in Raižiai (Lithuania) in 1899, and died in Switzerland in 1996. He was general secretary to the Mufti of Vilnius, Jakub Szynekiewicz, from 1940-1944. By 1944 at the latest, his mother Rosalija and his sisters Zemaida and Elena had joined him in Vienna. All except the latter emigrated to Argentina in 1948: Maria Emilia Zajączkowska-Łopatto, “Listy Włodzimierza Zajączkowskiego do profesora Tadeusza Kowalskiego (1936-1944)”, *Almanach Karaimski*, no. 7 (2018), 207; see also: Chalezki, “Erfreuliche Zustimmung”, *Moslemische Revue*, 12:1 (1936), 32; Gintarė Lukoševičiūtė, “LIETUVOS IR LENKIJOS MUSULMONŲ MIGRACIJOS RAIDA 1944-1990 METAIS” (Master Thesis, Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, Kaunas 2015), p. 34.

117 Naim Omari was born c. 1898 and died in 1961. He is buried at the Vienna Central Cemetery (gate 1, group 5A, row 19, no. 19, right to use the grave until 19 May 2025); <https://www.friedhofewien.at/verstorbenensuche-detail?fname=Naim+Omari&id=04%3E7%3EYRAMG&initialId=04%3E7%3EYRAMG&fdate=1961-06-29&c=046&hist=false>, accessed 17 June 2022.

118 Alija Konjhodžić was born in Ljubuški (Herzegovina) in 1899, and died in Toronto (Canada) in 1984. He was incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian army in Kaposfőhérvár (Hungary), from where he fled

Handzic Adem, Hamdi Turakan, Sotto Leon, Ing. Azabagic Teufik¹¹⁹ and Akmut Arif.

From this list, Bari became vice president, Omari general secretary, Konjhodžić secretary, Tunakan treasurer, and all others advisory board members. Murat Bajrović's list included: "Chalezky Bari, Turakan Hamdi, Akmut Arif, Merhemic Fadil, Jusuf Ibrahim, Hecimovic Muhiddim, Osmanagic Omer".

The election results were remarkable in several respects: 67 votes were cast from 73 members present (six abstained), all for Hadžialić's list, i.e., not a single person, not even Bajrović himself, voted for his list. A comment from Bajrović (and subsequent reactions) makes it clear that ponderous political interests, not supernatural charisma, were behind this, and contained the hint of a threat:

Mr. Bajrović gets the floor and begins with a longer explanation: The history of such communities shows that often unsuitable people were appointed to the leadership, sometimes also those who tried to serve private or third-party interests. We must not fall into the same trap. Above all, we must prevent the community from being subjected to foreign goals as a political instrument. People talk about Hadžialić and say that he is not suitable for leading the community because he belongs to the Berlin-based diplomatic corps¹²⁰

Here Bajrović refers to Hadžialić's role as imam of the Croatian embassy in Berlin, which made him a Croatian civil servant.¹²¹ Hölzel intervened immediately and,

and took part in the underground demoralisation actions of Czech military refugees in Budapest. In the interwar period he was active in Serbian nationalist organisations such as *Mlada Bosna* and *ORJUNA* in Osijek (Croatia), where he met Omer Kajmaković. Before the war he worked as a journalist and, according to his own statement, was instrumental in preventing the 1933 assassination attempt on King Aleksandar I in Zagreb. During the Second World War he was a member of Draža Mihailović's Chetniks. In 1943, the German forces deported him from Belgrade to Vienna, for forced labour. In his IRO documents, Konjhodžić states that as secretary of a "Yugoslav. Commun." (*Jugoslav. Gemeinsh.*, most likely the *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien*) he had been receiving 300 Reichsmarks in wages. At the end of the war he fled to Bludenz (western Austria), lived in Baden-Baden from 1949, and finally emigrated to Toronto (Canada) in 1953, where he was active in the diaspora as editor of the *Bratstvo* magazine; "Alija Konjhodžić, biografski zapisi", *Pogledi*, 17 March 2013, <https://www.pogledi.rs/alija-konjhodzic-biografski-zapisi.html>, accessed 9 June 2022; and CM/1 Files, PIRO Demande d'Assistance, Konjhodzic Alija, 1949, 3.2.1.1./79311563/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives; Jan L. Perkowski, "Interview with a Serbian Moslem", *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1986) 93–120; Imamović, *Bošnjaci u emigraciji*, p. 111.

119 Teufik Azabagić was born in Sarajevo in 1910. He emigrated to the United Kingdom shortly after the war, and then to Argentina in 1948: Frank Bogučanin, *Bošnjaci u Južnoj Americi* (Chicago: 2012), p. 14, https://issuu.com/bosniaco/docs/bosnjaci_u_juznoj_americi, accessed 29 January 2022; see also: "United Kingdom, Outgoing Passenger Lists, 1890-1960," Teufik Azabagic, 1948, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:68PJ-92QZ>, accessed 4 July 2022.

120 "Abschrift des Protokolls", 31 October 1943, sheet 40.

121 Hadžialić's involvement in the preparations for the 13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS *Handschar* is not to be underestimated (but also not overestimated). Al-Husseini may have received his copy of the November 1942 Bosnian memorandum from Hadžialić (Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 693–4), who accompanied him as a translator throughout the Reich. Hadžialić was also one of four teaching Muslims at the imam training centre for the *Handschar* Division in Guben: Hrvatski državni arhiv (Croatian State Archives), fund 1521, box 24, files Salihagić and Hadžialić; via Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 697 (fn 96).

“to keep the calm of the assembly,” demanded “the exclusion of all those who attack a nation”. Azabagić sided with Hadžialić with a statement in unspecified form. Hadžialić himself “replies to Bajrovic” in a way that is less a response than a subtle message:

The community is not responsible for the political behaviour of the members, this is much more a matter for the German authorities. For us the fact is sufficient, that the competent German authorities have approved the presence in the Reich by issuing the residence permit. When accepting new members, the main committee of course takes German law into account. As far as the political behaviour of individual members is concerned, the community will always take into account the suggestions of the responsible German authorities.

Hadžialić thereby, albeit somewhat cryptically, reduced Bajrović’s intra-community question about his political independence to the formal legal framework, and simultaneously raised the community’s state-political interests to the level of an unconditional internal maxim. When Hadžialić finally referred to “suggestions by the German authorities” on the “political behaviour of individual members”, he was most likely thinking, in abstract terms, of Hölzel’s demand for exclusion, which was probably aimed at Bajrović and those like him. The exclusion of a student from the community, who also supported him in his studies, was tantamount to losing his residence permit (on all accounts, Bajrović, the opponent of “everything Croatian” could not count on the support of the August Šenoa Croatian student association.

Recruitment attempts and the protection of Jews

The course of the meeting and its results also reflected a larger political development. If Bosnian Muslim aspirations for political and military autonomy – which could be attributed to Bajrović, and originally Hadžialić (see fn 121) – still had a chance of being realised in late 1942 and early 1943,¹²² these hopes were extinguished by September 1943. The NDH, which had opposed the formation of an autonomous Muslim military entity in Bosnia from the start, considering it a separatist hazard, reached an agreement with the SS in July 1943 regarding the nascent 13th Waffen Mountain Division, with respect to both the pre-agreed admission of Croatian Catholics¹²³ and the division’s exact operating sites.¹²⁴

122 It is doubtful whether this ever existed; the Reich never officially reacted to the 1 November 1942 memorandum, probably so as not to offend the NDH leadership.

123 See the Vrančić-Dengel agreement of 5 March 1943 in: Lepre, Himmler’s *Bosnian Division*, pp. 23–4.

124 Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, p. 499.

Contrary to expectations, their first training assignment in July and August did not take them to Bosnia, but to southern France to fight Partisans. In September 1943, near Villefranche-de-Rouergue, there was a pro-Partisan mutiny within the division.¹²⁵

If there had once been support in Bosnia for SS recruitment, this was no longer the case by autumn 1943. A large number of the soldiers in the 13th Waffen Mountain Division were forcibly conscripted, because there was a lack of volunteers.¹²⁶ The division also showed signs of decay through increasing incidences of desertion.¹²⁷

This mood was amplified among the Muslim students in Vienna. In March 1944, contrary to assurances of study-related postponement, the Bosnian students were finally requested to join the division to bolster its officer ranks with Muslims. The students are said to have unanimously refused, however, so this plan was postponed until further notice.¹²⁸ Gazija seems to confirm this, firmly denying that any of the Viennese Muslim students joined the division.¹²⁹ He reaffirms this with the story that he saw one of these students in an SS uniform in Graz in July 1943, but that even the student in question did not join any military unit during the war.¹³⁰ This does, however, suggest that some of the Viennese Muslim students at least toyed with the idea. Although Gazija's recollections confirm the general tendency at the time, they probably were limited to the students he knew, which does not exclude the possibility that some were more involved. It is known, for example, that Bajrović campaigned in Sandžak for the 13th Waffen Mountain Division on behalf of the SS.¹³¹

The Muslim students' initial refusal in early 1944 did not have any particular known consequences, as the Viennese authorities and the SS seemed to have lost interest in the Viennese Muslim students. This changed only towards the end of the war, when the *Wehrmacht's* military situation became increasingly desperate.

125 The mutiny was suppressed, 78 members of the division were executed, 825 were deported to the Dachau and Sachsenhausen concentration camps, and the division was relocated to Neuhammer (Silesia): Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, p. 499; Sulejmanpašić, *Handžar*, pp. 192 and 199.

126 Lepre, *Himmler's Bosnian Division*, p. 48-9; Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 856-875; Sabina Ferhadbegović, "Vor Gericht: Die Soldaten der Handschar-Division im Nachkriegsjugoslawien", *Südost-Forschungen*, 69:70 (2010), p. 238.

127 Sulejmanpašić, *Handžar*, p. 276-83; Enver Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War* (London; New York: Frank Cass, 2005), p. 193 and 194; and Lepre, *Himmler's Bosnian Division*, p. 253.

128 Muhamed Hadžijahić, *Posebnosti Bosne i Hercegovine i stradanja muslimana: Rukopis dostavljen Savezničkim snagama 1944.*, Mustafa Imamović and Atif Purivatra (ed.) (Sarajevo: Centar za bosanskomuslimanske studije, 1991), p. 95; via Bougarel, *Handschar*, loc. 6856 (fn 58).

129 He did, however, briefly mention the Berlin-based students Okić and Salihbegović (see fn 81-82) as "the main guys of the division": Gazija, personal interview, 3 February 2020 (part 1/2), 01:07:31.

130 Gazija personal interview, 2 February 2020, 00:34:45. Gazija said that "the mufti [probably] gave it to him", or that "our people gave it to him – that happened a lot". See fn 151.

131 Sulejmanpašić, *Handžar*, p. 124. After the war Bajrović emigrated to Turkey, where he became a successful entrepreneur: Šaćir Filandra and Enes Karić, *The Bosniac Idea* (Zagreb: Nakladni Zavod Globus, 2004), p. 42.

Certain circumstances indicate that Muslim students faced a new, more relentless wave of recruitment in the final months of the war. Gazija, for example, was picked up at work and deported to the Oberlanzendorf labour education camp (which Gazija called a “collection camp”) when he refused to join any military unit,¹³² and it is likely that other Muslims in Vienna were treated similarly. In his later documents to the PCIRO (Preparatory Commission for the International Refugee Organisation), Balić reports that he was “forced to dig trenches at the East wall” (maybe rather South-east wall?) in 1944, despite having lung and heart problems.¹³³ It is not known whether he did this as part of a military unit, however, let alone as part of the 13th Waffen Mountain Division,¹³⁴ or in a different context.¹³⁵

Until then, the community was able to go about its religious life relatively undisturbed, and the authorities did not keep a close eye on it.¹³⁶ This is supported by the assertion that the community gave protection and shelter to several Jews (or people with Jewish roots) without the authorities noticing. Although the exact number of those assisted in this way is not known, at least two people who would have been directly affected by Nazi racial legislation and persecution have been identified.

132 Gazija, personal interview, 2 February 2020, 00:55:38. Gazija remembers that at that time many of his colleagues disappeared from work, because men were being sent to the frontline in Hungary.

133 CM/1 Files, PCIRO Application for Assistance, Balić Smail, 1948, 3.2.1.3/80561744/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives.

134 The division was disbanded and dismantled by October 1944. Most remaining members (along with those of the defunct Kama division) formed two penal and labour battalions consisting of 900–1000 men, deployed in south-eastern Austria (Jennersdorf and Oberwart) to build the South-east wall: Lepre, *Himmler's Bosnian Division*, p. 268; see also: Eleonore Lappin, “Die Rolle der Waffen-SS beim Zwangsarbeiterereinsatz ungarischer Juden im Gau Steiermark und bei den Todesmärschen ins KZ Mauthausen (1944/45)”, *Jahrbuch des Dokumentationsarchivs des österreichischen Widerstandes* (2004), pp. 85–6.

135 When the Association of Moslems of Austria (*Verein der Moslems Österreichs*) was to be founded in Vienna, the Austrian authorities checked whether Balić had declared any former membership to the group of persons named in § 17, subparagraphs 2 and 3 of the *Verbotsgesetz* of 1947 (Prohibition Act, Federal Law Gazette, no. 25/1947; i.e., members of bodies such as the NSDAP, SA and SS. Although it was shown that he had not made such a declaration, Balić withdrew his application to found the association. When the process was resumed in Salzburg in 1951, the board members, with Balić again at the helm, submitted affidavits stating that they did not belong to the group of people charged under § 17, subparagraph 2 of the Prohibition Act. The association was admitted; Mag. Bezirksamt 4. u. 5. Bezirk zu Sicherheitsdirektion Wien, 15 April 1948, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 7206/1948, p. 6; and Balić to Polizeidirektion Wien, c. September 1951, “Muslimani u Austriji”, Bosniak Institute – Adil Zulfikarpašić Foundation (Sarajevo), Smail Balić Archive 3-VI-2, p. 10. Balić would later discuss the Handschar Division critically, in: Balić, “Bošnjaci u inostranstvu: Pustolovi, iseljenici, prognanici”, Salim A. Hadžić (trans.), *Glasnik Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 61:5–6 (1999), pp. 461–2. For his more general criticisms of the SS, Balić in Simon Wiesenthal's *The Sunflower: On the possibilities and limits of forgiveness*, Harry J. Cargas and Bonny V. Fetterman (ed.) (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), pp. 109–111.

136 The community held the last wartime Eid celebration in September 1944, and the press reported that the Arab imam Mohammed Magrili led the prayers: “Bajramfest der Islamen” [Bayram feast of the Muslims], *Oberdonau-Zeitung*, 30 September 1944, p. 3. Neither the name of the imam nor the terminology of the title indicate the involvement of familiar actors. Gazija, who lived permanently in Vienna from February 1944, reports that around 50 people took part in an Eid celebration: Gazija, personal interview, 3 February 2020 (part 1/2), 00:45:10.

Gazija recalls Sarajevo-born Paul Urban from the community meetings.¹³⁷ The Bosnian Muslim students welcomed Urban into their circle, and gave him the Muslim alias “Jusuf”.¹³⁸ “He would always work with them, he would always be with them, the students. No one would lay a finger on the students, nor did they attract any attention”, Gazija recalls.¹³⁹

The second case shows even more clearly how disinterested the authorities were regarding the community’s internal matters. Leon Sotto, who became a member of the advisory board, was named in the association’s election list from 31 October 1943, and in the election notification to the Vienna Police Chief. The notification identifies Sotto as a “merchant from Iran, residing in Vienna, II, Czerningasse 16”.¹⁴⁰ Aside from the fact that his Romance-sounding name

137 Paul “Pavo” Urban was born in Sarajevo in 1911, and died in 2010 in Vienna, where he is buried. He continued to use his alias “Jusuf” as a middle name (sometimes accompanied by “Ibruljević”, after a Bosnian soldier from the First World War, as an addition to his surname). He was the son of Austro-Hungarian officer and diplomat Modestus Urban and Marie Klebinder, who was registered with the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien (IKG Wien* [Jewish Community of Vienna]), which is why Urban was probably considered a *Geltungsjude* (counted Jew) according to Nazi legislation. After the war, he became a successful pharmaceutical entrepreneur, a member of the Austrian Communist Party, vice president of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, and president of the Yugoslav-Austrian Chamber of Commerce in Vienna. He kept in close contact with Balić (whom he connected to Simon Wiesenthal) and the other Bosnian Muslim students, who were by then scattered throughout the world. In (probably) 1976 or 1988, he visited his Muslim friends in Chicago to attend the opening of their mosque, the Islamic Cultural Center of Greater Chicago. In the early 1980s, he took part in the annual Meletta memorial event in Graz, with the Viennese traditional association of the *Eisnerbosniaken* regiment, which he also supported financially. In 1989, the “Austrian Society for Bosnian-Herzegovinian Relations” (*Österreichische Gesellschaft für Bosnisch-Herzegowinische Beziehungen*) was established in Graz (renamed *Österreichisch – Bosnisch & Herzegowinische Gesellschaft* in 2010), and he was made honorary president. Gazija recalls that Urban would regularly gather his wartime Muslim friends in Graz for the Meletta commemoration. Urban also gave scholarships to Bosnian and Herzegovinian students in Graz. During the Bosnian War (1992–1995) President Izetbegović appointed him special emissary of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria: Meldezettel für Haupt- (Jahres- und Monats-) Wohnparteien, Wien, Mirko Modestus Urban, 9 February 1911, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QGL9-6QFS>, accessed 10 December 2019; see also: “Marie Klebinder” (Urban), *Matriken IKG Wien*, Register of births, K 1885-1886, no. 2766, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:74PM-DZGZM>, accessed 10 December 2019; Manfred Mugrauer, *Die Politik Der KPÖ 1945-1955: Von der Regierungsbank in die innenpolitische Isolation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Unipress, 2020), p. 171; *Der gerade Weg*, new series 8:1 (1975), 11; Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:25:28; Gazija, personal interview, 3 February 2020 (part 1/2), 00:57:45; Salko Nazečić, “Odlazak velikog Bosanca”, *Bosanska*, 3 December 2010, no. 25, p. 12; “Jusuf Pavo Urban-Ibruljević: ‘Lakše je deset muha naučiti da idu jedna za drugom nego deset bošnjaka’”, 16 January 2020, <https://index.ba/lakse-je-deset-muha-nauciti-da-idu-jedna-za-drugom-nego-deset-bosnjaka/>, accessed 11 June 2023; and Reinhard Stadner, *Bosniens treue Söhne* (2007), p. 34, https://www.academia.edu/4937198/Bosniens_treue_S%C3%B6hne_Wien_2003_und_Graz_2007, accessed 20 January 2022. With thanks to Wolfgang Wildberger, Chairman of the “Austrian - Bosnian & Herzegovinian Society”, for information on Urban’s role in the Meletta memorial events.

138 It is not yet known who was behind the names “Jusuf Ahmed”, “Jussuf Ahmet” and “Jusuf Ibrahim” in the community’s minutes, which indicate the former as a “merchant from Turkey, residing in Vienna XVIII., Hildebrandgasse 26”; Hadžialić to the Vienna Chief of Police, Notification of the transcript of the election results, 1 November 1943, WStLA, M.Abt. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 36 (see also: sheets 39-40).

139 Gazija, personal interview (2019), 00:25:25.

140 Hadžialić to the police president of Vienna, Notification, 1 November 1943, sheet 36.

would be unusual for an Iranian, the address gives his religious background away, as it housed collective flats for Jews.¹⁴¹ In reality Sotto was a Jew from Bucharest, who (at least in 1939) worked for the emigration department of the Jewish Community of Vienna (*Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien*).¹⁴² The electoral coup within the community did not seem to change its inclination to protect Jews. While Urban was more likely to be protected by the original core group around Hećimović, Balić, Merhemić and Fočo, Sotto became a named member of the advisory board via Hadžialić's electoral list.

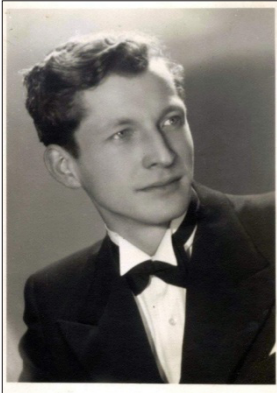


Figure 17.
Bari-Balys Chalecki

A partial continuation of this can be seen in Hadžialić's official endorsement to the authorities on 4 October 1944, regarding the impending foundation of the Association of Tatars and Karaims in Vienna (*Verein der Tataren und Karaimen in Wien*), whose main proponent was Bari-Balys Chalecki, vice president of the *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien*.¹⁴³ It seems, however, that he and the ultimately reduced name the Tatar Association in Vienna (*Tatarischer Verein zu Wien*), which used the crescent moon and star in its logo,¹⁴⁴ were used to obscure another circumstance (at least from the general public), this time with the knowledge and tolerance of the National Socialists: it was Musa-Michael Kowschanly (a representative of Seraj Szapszal, religious leader of the Jewish Karaimen) who commissioned Chalecki to establish the association.¹⁴⁵

The background to this was that as the *Wehrmacht* withdrew from the Crimean Peninsula in April 1944, not only Tatars but also about 1000 of the tolerated Jewish Karaims (Karaites) had fled to the Reich, because of their ethnic

141 "Czerningasse 16, 1020 Wien", <https://www.memento.wien/address/6242/>, accessed 11 June 2023.

142 Leon Sotto was born in Bucharest (Romania) in 1900, and died in 1992. He married Sarah Fanni Frieda Mitrani (1899-1986) in 1929. Whether the protection of the Islamic community extended to his wife and their son Ariel (born in 1930, and died in Haifa in 2013) is not known, although they all survived the war and emigrated to Haifa. Leon and Sarah must have returned to Vienna at some point, since they are buried together in the Jewish section of the Vienna Central Cemetery (gate 4, group 9, row 20, no. 15); Sotto, Leon, 1 February 2016, <https://www.grave-pictures.at/community/index.php?media/sotto-leon.25504/full>, accessed 11 June 2023; Sotto to Sotmann, 11 May 1939, no. 64234, and "45573, Sotto Leon, zu Ba..., 20.06.1939," Register department of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, Jewish Emigrant Applications, 1938-1939, folios 15 and 19, <https://www.myheritage.at/research/collection-11000/osterreich-wien-judische-auswanderungsantrage-1938-1939?itemId=253078&action=showRecord>, accessed 11 June 2022. For marriage data see: "Leon Sotto", MyHeritage.com, in "Austria, Vienna, Jewish Vital Records, 1835-1938"; see also: AU Registration of former persecutes in Austria, "Liste der in Wien lebenden Glaubensjuden 1946" (IKG Wien, p. 74), Sotto Sara, 3.1.1.3/78805450/ ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives.

143 Hadžialić to Reichsstatthalterei Wien, 4 October 1944, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 1547/1944, sheet 5.

144 Chalecki to Reichsstatthalterei Wien, 4 December 1944, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 1547/1944, sheet 21.

145 Kowschanly to Reichsstatthalter Wien, 4 October 1944, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 1547/1944, sheet 4.

proximity to the Muslim Tatars. In late summer 1944, the Tatars¹⁴⁶ and most of the Karaims (including those from Poland and Lithuania) are said to have come to Vienna, according to Kowschanly because of tensions with the head of the Crimean Tatar Central Office (*Krimtatarische Leitstelle*) in Berlin, who did not cooperate with them, and allegedly reported them incorrectly more than once. Kowschanly explains: “In Vienna these Tatars and Karaims were accepted into the ‘Islamische Gemeinschaft’. The Islamic community gave them appropriate protection and help.” He adds that he and Chalecki subsequently decided to establish an association for Tatars and Karaims in Vienna.¹⁴⁷

In his statement on the religious relationship between Tatars and Karaims (which expressly did not raise any objection to the foundation), Hölzel writes that the latter are “not pure Muslims but a sect that has a Muslim-Christian structure and therefore does not participate in the ‘Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien’.”¹⁴⁸ It is conceivable that Hölzel was not familiar with the actual religious nature of the Karaims. It is certain, however, that the Nazi leadership had been grappling with the religious and ethnic classification of the Karaims since 1938.¹⁴⁹ and that on Himmler’s orders, Berger recommended out of consideration¹⁵⁰ for their proximity to the Tatars, to refrain from discriminating against them and to integrate them militarily into “construction or labour battalion[s]”,¹⁵¹ but “to conceal their existence from the public as far as possible”.¹⁵² Any cover-up of their Jewish character in official correspondence outside the SS is therefore unsurprising. This is likely also the reason for the deletion of the word “Karaims” from the association’s name.¹⁵³ Clear traces remained in the association’s bylaws, however, in which it was used extensively, and in whose 12th point it was determined that “ex officio every incumbent Imam and Hassan” (Hazzan, i.e., a Karaim religious dignitary) would join the executive advisory board.¹⁵⁴

146 As early as 1943, 14 young Tatars from Vilnius went to study in Vienna, at the invitation of Germany; Gintarė Lukoševičiūtė, “LIETUVOS IR LENKIJOS MUSULMONŲ MIGRACIJOS RAIDA 1944-1990 METAIS” (Master Thesis, Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, Kaunas 2015), p. 206 (fn 147).

147 Kowschanly to SS Hauptamt Berlin, 12 February 1945, BArch NS 31/33, sheet 21-2; and Kiril Feferman, “Nazi Germany and the Karaites in 1938–1944: Between Racial Theory and *Realpolitik*”, *Nationalities Papers*, 39:2 (2011), pp. 285-6.

148 Hölzel to Heilsberg, 5 October 1944, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 1547/1944, sheet 1.

149 Feferman, “Karaites”, p. 280.

150 Mikhail Borisovich Kizilov, *The Sons of Scripture: The Karaites in Poland and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 309-10.

151 This may explain why Karaim musicians were said to have worn “German uniforms” at a Tatar and Karaim folk music event in Vienna in 1945: Kizilov, *The Sons of Scripture*, p. 316 (fn 1503).

152 Berger to Brandt, 24 November 1944, BArch NS 31/33, sheet 53.

153 The large handwritten note “Name!” on Hölzel’s letter to the *Reichsstatthaltere* may have been written for the same reason. Kowschanly’s statement to the SS central office, on the other hand, was that “the Karaims also belong to the Tatars in terms of their ethnicity”: Kowschanly to SS Hauptamt (Berlin), 12 February 1945, Bundesarchiv NS 31/33, sheet 21, p. 2; for the contrary, Kizilov, *The Sons of Scripture*, pp. 310-11.

154 “Statuten des Tatarischen Vereins zu Wien e.V.” [Bylaws of the Tatar Association in Vienna], WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 1547/1944, sheet 15 (p. 3 of the bylaws).

Finally, on 3 December 1944, “the first constitutive general meeting of the members of the Tatar Association in Vienna” took place “in the rooms of the Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien, Vienna I, Jasomirgottstr. 2/I/5”, at which the 29 members present of the total 33 elected a board and advisory board from two lists.¹⁵⁵ Almost all officials and members appearing in the association file, where mentioned, were stated as Muslims,¹⁵⁶ most likely because of the uncertain attitude of the National Socialist regime towards the Karaims.

The community’s post-war fate

According to his own statement, Hadžialić finally left Vienna westwards for Innsbruck shortly before the end of the war, under pressure from “refugees from the USSR”.¹⁵⁷ The majority of the Islamic community left Vienna together, by train to Salzburg. This was most likely at the beginning of April 1945 when, as Gazija recalls, the Red Army was “near Mödling”, a southern suburb of Vienna. Gazija had fled to Vienna from Oberlanzendorf shortly before this.¹⁵⁸ When the group arrived at the train station in Salzburg, they were told there was not enough space for everyone, so a group of fifteen to twenty people, including Gazija, continued by train south to Carinthia.¹⁵⁹

The US military administration infrastructure meant that Salzburg quickly established itself as a centre for the community members, and many other displaced Muslims joined them within a short time. Most were likely to have been members of the Croatian *Domobran*, the Croatian legions of the *Wehrmacht*, and

155 Executive board: Bari-Balys Chalecki (president), Michael Dubinski (general secretary, born 1903 in Traken/Vilnius), Merjema Tuhan-Baranowski (secretary), Mehmed Muedin (treasurer), and Kamilla Ibrahim (member, born 1916 in Warsaw). Advisory board: Valejus Biosevas (born 1919 in Bazory Alitua), Abu-Bekir Chalecki (born 1914 in Vilnius), and Ali-Alexander Smaikevich. Revision commission: Memet-Mucharrem (Menech) Adamowitsch (born 1881 in Punj/Ausiska), Simon Spakowski (born 1880 in Troki/Vilnius), and Sulejman Murza-Murzitsch. Other members were listed in the founding notice and the association’s records: Abdul Hamid Churanowicz (born 1892 in Luck), Ibrahim Penbek (born 1893 in Troki/Vilnius), Zarema Lebeds (Pilarska, born 1913 in Słupca) and Ali Alexander Akhmatovitch (born 1920 in Warsaw).

156 “Orth. religion” is cited for Kamilla Ibrahim. Michael Dubinski declared himself as Roman Catholic when he emigrated to Canada in 1951 (DE I d Emigrations in 1951, Dubinski Michael, 3.1.3.2/81679119/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives). Conversely, Ibrahim Penbek stated in his 1947 refugee documents in Italy that he was Karait: CM/1 Files, IGCR Questionnaire, Penbek Ibrahim, 3.2.1.2/80451785/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives.

157 Nusret Čančar and Enes Durmišević, “Naš intervju: Salih Hadžialić”, *Islamska misao*, 12:133 (1990), 7.

158 Gazija, personal interview, 2 February 2020, 01:03:20. It is likely that most of the Tatars left Vienna at about the same time, but towards Italy: Lukoševičiūtė, “LIETUVOS IR LENKIJOS MUSULMONŲ MIGRACIJOS RAIDA 1944-1990 METAIS,” p. 29.

159 Gazija, personal interview, 2 February 2020, 01:03:45.

the remnants of the 13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS, who had fought their way into areas held by the Western Allies in the last weeks of the war. Many were followed by family members and other civilians, who feared reprisals in communist Yugoslavia.¹⁶⁰

By 6 August 1945, a new community structure was formed from the remnants of the old Viennese community and an additional 87 “new” Muslims. The community was soon to expand: it helped about 1000 Muslim displaced persons in the US zone, under the name “Moslem Religious Community” (“Salzburg” was added to the name in its English and German versions, *Moslemische Religionsgemeinschaft* and *Moslemische religiöse Gemeinschaft*).¹⁶¹ The old core group seems to have receded into the background once again, as the displaced persons now included older and more established religious authorities, such as former military imam and Sharia judge Ishak Imamović and madrasa teacher Hazim Šatrić, who assumed leadership of the community.¹⁶²

Hećimović and Balić, both of whom were most likely in Vienna in the post-war years,¹⁶³ as well as Maslić (who soon returned to Vienna) and five others may only have taken the initiative when it became foreseeable that Šatrić (the head of the Salzburg community) would emigrate to the United Kingdom by June 1948, creating a leadership vacuum. In a letter drafted by Balić on 1 March 1948, they announced the founding of the Association of Moslems of Austria (*Verein der Moslems Österreichs*) for the “actual, continuous basis of the Viennese Islamic community,”¹⁶⁴ and referenced the fact that a “similar association”¹⁶⁵ had been active in Vienna “until the end of the war”.¹⁶⁶ Whether they previously considered or claimed the ability to act on behalf of the *Islamische Gemeinschaft*

160 A 1947 article (by “J.B.”) in *Die Presse* gives an overall impression of the background and composition of Muslims in Austria. It is reproduced in: Balić, *Die Muslims im Donaauraum*, p. 18.

161 Registration Lists of DP Camps, ICRC Geneva/Salzburg office, La liste des réfugiés musulmans en Salzburg, 6 August 1945, 3.1.1.2/82047752-82047754/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives; Daidžić (Moslem Religious Community Salzburg) to Chapman (UNRRA Klagenfurt), 7 July 1946, in “Discipline - Displaced Persons - Regime - Displaced Persons 1”, UNRRA, 1944-1949, S-1503-0000-0021, United Nations Archives.

162 CM/1 Files, PCIRO Application for Assistance, Imamovic Ishak, 1948, 3.2.1.3 /80666410/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives; see also: Dautović, “40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien”, p. 102 (fn 14); CM/1 files, PCIRO Application for Assistance, Satric Hazim, 1949, 3.2.1.6/81348141/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives; and Hazim Fazlić (ed.), *First Bosnians in the UK* (Birmingham: Bosnian Cultural Centre - Midlands, 2009), p. 44.

163 Gazija confirms that Balić stayed in Vienna, although he participated in the community’s preparations to leave for Salzburg: Gazija, personal interview, 2 February 2020, 01:03:30.

164 The exact German wording: “[...] der Wiener islamischen Gemeinde”.

165 The striking similarity of the association bylaws to those of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* (or rather its counterpart in Berlin) from the beginning of 1943 was already noticed in Pintz, “Vom Moslemischen Sozialdienst zur Islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft”, p. 105); see also: Dautović, “40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien”, p. 115; and “Statuten des Vereines der Moslems Oesterreichs in Wien”, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 7206/1948, sheets 19-23.

166 Balić to Magistrat Wien (Abt. für Vereinswesen), 1 March 1948, WStLA, M.Ab. 119.A32, 7206/1948, sheet 1.



Figure 18. f.l.t.r.: Smail Balić, Muhamed Pilav and Adil Zulfikarpašić, in Vienna c. mid-1950s.

zu Wien (as an association) in its dealings with the authorities is a matter for speculation. From the point of view of the Viennese association department, neither Balić, Hećimović nor Maslić were authorised to represent the association, and those who were had disappeared.¹⁶⁷ It was not until 12 years later that the Austrian authorities dealt with the abuse of legal form regarding the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* (see fn 45),¹⁶⁸ which, had it been corrected, may have legitimised Hećimović and Fočo as members of the founding board.

It is, however, likely that the foundation notification startled the Vienna Security Directorate (*Sicherheitsdirektion Wien*) and the law enforcement division of the Austrian interior ministry, the Directorate General for Public Security (*Generaldirektion für öffentliche Sicherheit*). In a circular letter from 3 April, the latter prompted all security directorates to “report immediately” whether Muslim associations existed, or were about to be established.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, on 10 April, the Vienna Security Directorate requested information from the responsible registration offices about the eight founding proponents of the Association of Moslems of Austria, and whether they had reported any former Nazi affiliation according to § 17 subparagraph 2 or 3 of the Prohibition Act (*Verbotsgesetz 1947*; see fn 135).¹⁷⁰

The result: the *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien* was deleted from the register of associations “because it had not been active for years”, “and some of the board members had unknown whereabouts and some were not registered at the given

167 Handžić was already back in Yugoslavia, but there was no trace of Sinanović.

168 Weiler, “Entscheidung des OLG. Linz vom 2.2.1961, 1 Nc 49/59.”

169 Seidler (Generaldirektion für die öffentliche Sicherheit), “Runderlass an alle Sicherheitsdirektionen”, 3 April 1948, WStLA, M.Abt. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 47.

170 The request (with the bylaws attached) was sent directly to the registration offices and the Ministry of the Interior (responsible for association matters), and forwarded to the Ministry of Education (responsible for religious matters, especially the *Kultusgemeinden* of legally recognised churches and religious societies). Ernst Hefel, the then head of the Department for Religious Matters (*Kultusamt*), thought that the Islamic religious society had never been established or recognised. This is contrary to the wording of the Islam Act of 1912, and may explain the motives of the authorities: Hefel, “Kirche und Staat in Österreich”, in *Staatslexikon*, vol. 3, Sacher Hermann (ed.) (Freiburg im Breisgau: Görres-Gesellschaft/Herder, 1923), p. 255.

residential addresses”.¹⁷¹ Balić, however, withdrew the founding notification for the Association of Moslems of Austria under dubious circumstances.¹⁷² On 4 May, the Directorate General for Public Security was supposed to state that it had no objections to the formation, but by the time it finally did so it was too late.¹⁷³ The association was eventually founded in 1951, with its headquarters in Salzburg: an early stage of the decades-long odyssey¹⁷⁴ to restore the community the Muslim students formed in 1942. “Recognition”¹⁷⁵ of the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien* as the first organisational unit of the religious society of Muslims in Austria according to the administrative state-church law did not occur until 1979.

Conclusion

Regardless of these facts about the history of the *Gemeinde* and its members up to the post-war period, much remains in the dark, and essential parts of this history have been lost. This is partly because research into the history of Muslims

171 Polizeidirektion Wien to Sicherheitsdirektion Wien, 27 April 1948, WStLA, M.Abt. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 49. Balić, on the other hand, states 46 years later that the association was “dissolved in 1948 at the instigation of the other members”: Balić, “Zur Geschichte der Muslime in Österreich I”, p. 28.

172 The withdrawal letter issued in Balić’s name, which cites economic reasons, is handwritten, but the date (23 April 1948) was added in a stamp, and the script is clearly different from Balić’s. It was, however, signed by Balić and another person, whose name is illegible, but shows no resemblance to the signatures of other proponents: Balić, “Erklärung”, 23 April 1948, WStLA, M.Abt. 119.A32, 7206/1948, sheet 1 (p. 2).

173 The circumstances suggest that this moment of discontinuity in the already complicated organisational history of Muslims in Austria may have been deliberate. At the time, restitution claim laws were being prepared and enacted, which made it possible to restore the religious organisations of all legally recognised religious societies dissolved by the National Socialists. The only one left unconsidered was that of the followers of Islam. The case of the *Islamischer Kulturbund in Wien*, which was dissolved in 1939, could have been taken into account by the 2nd Act on Restitution Claims (2. *Rückstellungsanspruchsgesetz*, BGBl. [Federal Law Gazette] no. 176/1951), as could possibly also the question of the abuse of legal form with regard to the *Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien*; Dautović, “40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien”, p. 117 (fn 102).

174 Over the decades, the Austrian section of Jami’at al Islam (1957–1961) and the Muslim Social Service (1962) were established.

175 The author is aware that this term may be misleading, and of its potential to be confused with the (legal) recognition of churches and religious societies (according to article 15 of the Basic State Law – *Staatsgrundgesetz* – of 1867, RGBl. no. 142/1867). In this case, it refers to what administrative law and the Recognition Act of 1874 mean by the “approval” (*Genehmigung*) of religious communities (i.e., the basic religious organisational units of religious societies), and what doctrine and the judiciary reinterpreted (decades later) in accordance with fundamental rights as “approving notice” (*genehmigende Kenntnisnahme*): Herbert Kalb, Richard Potz, and Brigitte Schinkele, *Religionsrecht* (Vienna: WUV Universitätsverlag, 2003), p. 107-8. Because Austrian legal language had previously lacked a clear and suitable term that conformed to fundamental rights, in literature and case law of the time (and subsequent decades) the term “recognition” was also used for this legal act; Dautović, “40 Jahre seit Wiederherstellung der IRG-Wien”, p. 102; and Dautović, “40 Jahre Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich?: Vom historischen Missverständnis zu Alter und Wesen der IGGÖ”, in *Die Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*, Dautović and Hafez (ed.), p. 178.

in Austria began too late, after almost all those involved had died (f.i., Pintz's research in the mid-2000s, while Fočo, the last of the core group, died just in 2007), and even then it received little attention from Muslims or academia. Further, the public records of even the most active members (f.i., Balić)¹⁷⁶ were at best short, detached comments on the community's history. The fact that the same name was used for the first Islamic *Kultusgemeinde* 29 years later in 1971 makes it clear that there was no lack of awareness of the historical and legal singularity of the *Gemeinde* in the history of Muslims in Austria.

In a personal conversation in 2018, Salim A. Hadžić (Balić's colleague and the former imam of the Muslim Social Service [established in Vienna in 1962]), told me in the context of the war and the immediate post-war period that Balić was always reluctant to talk "about the past". The 1948 attempt by *Gemeinde* members to found an association, the alarmist reaction of the authorities (including their investigation into possible Nazi affiliation), and the dubious revocation/postponement of the founding, give the impression that the founders were intimidated by being confronted with knowledge about a compromising wartime past, to whatever extent. This is not surprising, as the obstructive and interventionist attitude of the Nazi authorities towards the community described here was by no means an exception, but rather represents a fundamental continuity of Austrian policy toward Islam that dated back to the Austro-Hungarian period and ran well into the Second Republic, deviating only in exceptional cases.

On the question of community members' collaboration: Although some were members of the 369th (Croatian) Infantry Division of the *Wehrmacht*, based on an agreement between the Reich and the NDH the division was made up of conscripts, so its membership cannot be considered voluntary. As far as is known, Bajrović was the only one of the Viennese students to participate in the Handschar Division. This, along with the fact that he (rather than members of the core group) headed the election list against Hadžialić, suggests that a minimum loyalty to, or dependence on, political representatives was necessary, even for opposition candidacy.

Whether it is likely that the predominantly autonomist sentiments of the Muslim students in 1942 and early 1943 made them receptive to the idea of a "Muslim division"¹⁷⁷ for an autonomous Bosnia is a matter of speculation at best. If their fundamental motive to study and their efforts to develop the student support character of the community are taken into account, however, it seems unlikely that

176 The decisions of the Austrian Supreme Court and the Linz Higher Regional Court of 2 February 1961 regarding Leila Finsterer/Dončagić (see fn 45) – as preserved in Weiler's paper – show that the Vienna community members who gave evidence as witnesses (Balić, Balagija and Šahinović) in the non-public proceedings provided the court with extensive significant information about the community's history.

177 The Viennese students most likely only learned during Al-Husseini's April 1943 visit that the "Muslim division" for the self-defense of Bosnian Muslims would be part of the SS.

they had any serious interest in military involvement and that even potential raising of the authorities's hopes was probably no more than lip service. This is supported by their tensions with the authorities during the course of 1943, and their refusal to join the army in March 1944. Pilav apparently went further, and tried to persuade Handschar recruits, who were passing through Vienna in 1944, to desert.¹⁷⁸

There is scant written or photographic evidence of exoneration, and the primary sources referred to in this paper alone would have been capable of giving the superficial appearance of collaboration with the National Socialists. Be it by taking part (albeit with other intentions) in an Eid celebration secretly initiated by the Nazi propaganda department; concluding the notification of the founding of the community with "Heil Hitler!"; or simply by appearing in official documents as a member of an association whose leaders were deeply involved in the Handschar Division, such actions are part of the historical record. In the context of post-war denazification, considering the political mood of the Second Republic, having been in company of collaborators, it was probably for many reason enough to remain silent about any of the community's activities, which in 1948 were likely sufficient material for the authorities to intimidate the proponents of the association, especially as they were in the precarious position of "stranded" foreigners.

The members of the *Gemeinde* were by no means resistance fighters, nor could they have been expected to be, given their personal circumstances as "non-Aryan" foreigners in Nazi Vienna. Their first priority was their own survival and safety, which depended on the goodwill of the Viennese National Socialists. This might have forced them into at least superficial and formal cooperation with the authorities. Despite this, it seems that in moments of truth they did not take lives, but instead risked their own to save others.

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Figure 1: Hadžialić to Heilsberger, 1 November 1943, in: "Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien", Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (WStLA), M.Ab. 119.A32, 196/1943, sheet 29; courtesy of the WStLA; digitised by Rijad Dautović.

Figure 2: "SS-Hauptamt", Bild 146-1985-116-19A, Bundesarchiv NS 31/44, fol. 1-312, sheet 1; courtesy of the Bundesarchiv.

Figure 3: Prüfungsprotokoll d. II. Staatsprüfung (Architektur), prot. no. 1478 (28.6.1949, M. Hecimovic), Archives of Vienna University of Technology (AVUT); courtesy of the AVUT; digitised by Rijad Dautović.

178 Pilav mentions 17-year-old Sulejman Žilić and Munib Bjelan; Pilav, *U ustaškoj emigraciji*, 107-8.

- Figure 4:** Smail Balić, “Vjersko naličje bosanskog islama”, *Osvit*, 1 October 1943, Ramazanski Bajram 1943; courtesy of the Gazi Husrev-beg library.
- Figure 5:** courtesy of Selma Monson.
- Figure 6:** Amir Brka, *O dr. Ademu Handžiću*, p. 3; courtesy of Lejla Simić.
- Figure 7:** *Wiener Bilder*, 20.11.1932, p. 4, <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=wrb&datum=19321120&seite=4&zoom=33>, accessed 5 December 2023.
- Figure 8:** Smail Balić, *Die Muslims im Donauraum*, p. 98; courtesy of the Bosniakisch-Muslimischer Kultur- Sport- und Sozialverein "MSD"; digitised by Rijad Dautović.
- Figure 9:** courtesy of Mehmed Spaho (jun.).
- Figure 10:** courtesy of Mehmed Spaho (jun.).
- Figure 11:** Sig.: ZFAZ XI-2/1, Bosniak Institute - Adil Zulfikarpašić Foundation (BI); courtesy of the BI.
- Figure 12:** courtesy of Meral Murat-khan.
- Figure 13:** courtesy of Nilofar Akmut.
- Figure 14:** <https://www.istanbulfr.org/unutmadiklarimiz/>, accessed 25 october 2023; courtesy of the Istanbul University, Istanbul Faculty of Medicine;
- Figure 15:** Jami'at al Islam Bulletin, no. 2 (1959), 5.
- Figure 16:** courtesy of Nurko Gazija; digitised by Rijad Dautović.
- Figure 17:** <http://ltim.lt/galerija/zymus-zmones/chaleckas-balys-lietuvos-totoriu-visuomenes-veikejas-totoriu-jaunimo-aktyvistas/>, accessed 25 October 2023; courtesy of Kęstutis Zenonas Šafranavičius (Lietuvos totorių istorijos muziejus, Kaunas).
- Figure 18:** Sig.: ZFAZ XI-2/1, Bosniak Institute - Adil Zulfikarpašić Foundation (BI); courtesy of the BI.

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Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien (osnovana 1942. godine): Muslimani u Beču između kolaboracije i zaštite Jevreja tokom Drugog svjetskog rata

Sažetak

Članak se bavi zaboravljenom historijom „Islamske općine u Beču“ (*Islamische Gemeinde zu Wien*, registrovani naziv: *Islamische Gemeinschaft zu Wien*), organizacije muslimana u Beču tokom Drugog svjetskog rata. U prvom dijelu preispituju se rijetke informacije o njoj u literaturi, koje je spominju isključivo u kontekstu kolaboracije. Na osnovu iskaza jednog svjedoka dešavanja i malo poznatih izvora tajne policije NDH, članak zatim daje složenu sliku male zajednice studenata, uglavnom bosanskih muslimana, koji su se našli između nacističkih planova regrutacije za nastajuću 13. SS oružanu brdsku diviziju “Handžar”, bošnjačkih autonomaških aspiracija i lične težnje studenata da izbjegnu vojnu službu, uz to i nastojanja za zaštitu Jevreja. Članak time osvjetljava ranu povijest jedne zajednice, čiji su glavni članovi imali ključnu ulogu u institucionalizaciji islamske zajednice u poslijeratnoj Austriji, što je rezultiralo ponovnim zvaničnim odobrenjem organizacije 1979. godine.

Ključne riječi: Drugi svjetski rat, muslimani, Austrija, Beč, Handžar divizija, Smail Balić, Bosna, Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich