

INTRODUCTION



Bernard Bardach

A Biographical Sketch

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The Bernhard Bardach collection comprises a unique treasure in the archival holdings of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York—a personal archive that bears witness to the horrors of the twentieth century. On the one hand, the Bardach war diaries—published here in the English language for the first time—preserve the impressions and experiences of a senior military physician during the whole of World War I—6 August 1914 through 1 January 1919—described in minute detail.¹ On the other hand, and just as relevant, are his photo albums, which tell not only of the Eastern Front but also of the civilian population caught up between the opposing sides in the vortex of fighting. These albums comprise an inexhaustible repository for visual history of World War I's Eastern front.² The six volumes of diaries and the albums permit a unique, in-depth look at everyday events on the Eastern Front, which, in contrast to other fronts in this war, remained at least partially mobile. Availability of all this material in easily accessed digitized form greatly facilitates research.

The diaries and albums tell us a great deal about Bardach's life during the four years of the war; however, much less is known about his life before and after the conflict. His daughter Miki Denhof prepared a short biography of her father for the Leo Baeck Institute, with as complete an overview of his life as she could manage. Tanja Grössing has included the latter report in the short biographical sketches of her noteworthy master's thesis (in collaboration with Petra Ernst) at the University of Graz.³ I have complemented and clarified parts of Bardach's biography using additional documents from the Austrian State Archives⁴ and the University of Graz⁵ to provide as accurate a glimpse as I can into the life of Dr. Bernhard Bardach before, during, and after the war.

Bardach's Life before 1914

Bardach was born in Lemberg, in Austrian Galicia, one of the centers of Jewish life, both assimilated and orthodox. The great jurists Raphael Lemkin and Hersch Lauterpacht were born there. Martin Buber was raised there, and the novelist Joseph Roth was born at Brody (Ukraine), nearby.⁶ An extract of the Lemberg (Lviv, Ukraine) birth register confirms that “Berisch Bardach, son of Israel . . . Bardach and his wife Rive was born on 3 August 1866.”⁷ Names of the midwife and witnesses are also recorded. His father was a merchant.

After several years in a Jewish elementary school, Bernhard moved to the Lemberg gymnasium (German academic high school), followed by the second upper school (gymnasium), where he graduated. At the age of twenty, he entered the University of Vienna, to study medicine. Every fifth semester, he studied in both Vienna and Graz. On the enrollment page, his mother tongue is given as German, and his religion as Jewish (*mosaisch*). From the winter semester of 1887/88 to the end of winter semester 1892/93, he was enrolled, first as ordinary, then (in the 1893 summer semester) as senior student, before passing the final oral examination. He passed the first oral examination on 24 March 1890, the second on 1 December 1892, and, only five days after the third examination on 22 June 1893, he graduated as doctor of general medicine.⁸ His academic career was satisfactory, though not particularly distinguished. In 1892, he obtained two excellent evaluations in internal medicine; other than that, all examinations are marked “satisfactory,” all on the first attempt.⁹ It may be assumed, but not definitely proven with existing documentation, that anti-Semitism played a role in his “satisfactory” examination results at the University of Graz.

On 23 April 1888, Bardach registered as a one-year volunteer in the Habsburg army: this guaranteed him a study stipend, but entailed six years of active service thereafter. In 1893, a few weeks after his graduation, he was appointed secondary physician and then senior physician on active service. In 1908, he successfully passed the test for surgeon major.¹⁰ His list of service assignments before the war is long. He had to interrupt his studies from 1 April to 30 September 1890, to perform his obligatory six-month service in the thirtieth Lemberg infantry regiment.

Bardach served his first year as military physician at the twenty-third garrison hospital in Agram (Zagreb, Croatia), as secondary physician in the surgical department. He spent most of the following four years in Fiume (now part of Italy) among other duties as representative of the chief regimental physician. From 1 September 1898, he taught at the infantry cadet school in Kamenitz (Kamenice nad Lipou, Czech Republic), where he functioned as “teacher and chief school physician.” The following year, he served as interim commandant of the fifth Ulan Regiment troop hospital in Warasdin (Varaždin, Croatia), un-

til he was again transferred on 1 May 1900, to Czortkow (Chortkiv, Ukraine), as chief regimental physician, chief garrison physician, and commandant of the troop hospital of the first Ulan Regiment.

Five years later, Bardach was transferred back to the thirtieth infantry regiment in Lemberg, where he spent the next four years as chief physician in command and at times as chief regimental physician. In August 1909, he was transferred again, as chief physician to the fourth Bosnian-Herzegovinian infantry regiment in Trieste, which would be his main place of residence for several years. Although his war archive documents classify him as a “dental specialist,” his job was to prove himself proficient in all fields of medical treatment.

In 1885, his personal file states that he “cannot ride.” By 1897, his “riding has improved,” and finally in 1902 he is “capable of riding for official duties” —a skill that he would need urgently, during the coming war. His service evaluations do not deviate from the norm, and he was promoted “according to rank and period of duty.” His military career reflects the possibility that Jews could make a career—especially a medical one—in the Austro-Hungarian Army, without often being confronted by open anti-Semitism. Mobility, however, was an absolute prerequisite, and Bardach’s many transfers before the war were not at all unusual.

Bardach’s 1911 service evaluation provides detailed information about his military career and private relationships. His 1912 evaluation states tersely “as in 1911” without any additions. In 1911, the following are noted:

Rank: Surgeon major, Regimental chief physician

Knowledge of languages: Excellent written and spoken German, very eloquent style, excellent communication skills. Polish, Croatian: military usage sufficient for service needs.

Private relationships: Married with secure annual income of 1,600 crowns, assets inherited from his deceased first wife. Two daughters: Bettina born in 1900, Ega born in 1904. Married again in 1909, against a security indemnity of 40,000 crowns. Finances in good order.

Health: Fit for war service. Very shortsighted, uses glasses. Medium height, strong build.

Character: Upright character, performs duties conscientiously.¹¹

This document tells us a great deal. Pointedly, perhaps, no mention is made of religion; by contrast, detailed information on his knowledge and abilities inside the military, leadership qualities, and especially private relationships, are noted.

Bardach married soon after the end of his studies and entry into military service. His first wife, Henia, was the daughter of a Jewish landowner. The marriage yielded two daughters, Bettina and Ega. Henia died soon after the

birth of their second child, and, five years later, he remarried. His second wife, Olga, daughter of a textile manufacturer named Krieger, was born 21 February 1886 in Bielitz, Silesia (Bielsko-Biała, Poland), and was twenty years younger than her husband. The second marriage yielded two more daughters, Miki and Mary, the latter of whom was born during the war. Bardach refers repeatedly to Olga and his four daughters in his war diary. This family—Olga with two of her own children and two from his previous marriage—were his emotional fulcrum, throughout the turmoil of a war, which drove him through different regions of Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Italy. We will meet them again in the description of his life during the decades after the Great War. After the outbreak of the war, Olga moved from Trieste to Vienna with the four children.

Military documents show that Bardach was awarded two decorations during peacetime: The Jubilee Memorial Medal of the Armed Forces, and the Military Jubilee Cross. Both awards reflect his long period of service. Bernhard Bardach was already forty-eight when the long period of peace, during which he grew up, ended. He was born during the last great battle of the Habsburg Empire and had experienced no warlike confrontations in his twenty years of service. He went to the front as a mature man of senior military-medical rank, and decided to record his experiences there in word and photograph.

The War Years

Bernhard Bardach's war diary—presented here in its first complete English translation—describes the fifty-three months of war that followed accurately and in great detail. Bardach's writing style is sober, with a great deal of medical terminology. The text is peppered with foreign words and many abbreviations, indicating that the diary was meant only for his personal reading, not for others, let alone a wider reading public.¹² Tanja Grössing has comparatively analyzed the Bardach diaries and those of Egon Ernst Kisch, which were meant for publication. She shows that the first few volumes underwent only light revision, not of content but rather of grammar and syntax. The writing style, however, remains the same. Bardach's written expressiveness is, as noted in his previous service evaluations, excellent. Once one has become used to his Gothic cursive handwriting, texts are easily deciphered. However, in order to obtain a complete picture of his emotional experiences, the photo albums, which are much more than supplementation of the written material, are essential. The photographs show what Bardach considered worthy of preservation: they include everyday occurrences as well as an astonished, almost colonial, view of the indigenous population, especially the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. The photos also cast a pitiless eye on the victims of this terrible war.

The albums are worthy of a separate analytical book; Jay Winter has made extensive use of these in lectures and publications.

Bardach's diaries permit an exact reconstruction of his frontline service. His written notes begin with an almost semiofficial introduction, from the viewpoint of a loyal member of the Habsburg Empire. He summarizes the period between the murder of the heir to the throne until the declaration of war, in a scant six diary pages. His personal war diary follows. The diary eschews all sentimentality. Among the darkness and tears at the Trieste railway station, he remarks tersely: "I am happy that I spared my family the pain of accompanying me to the station." The journey to the front leaves him with ambivalent feelings. "Beautiful maidens crowd around our carriages, throw flowers at us, like going to a dance" alternates with "even if we are victorious, if it goes on like this, there will be mass murder and the destruction of untold numbers of lives." The author is too worldly-wise to resemble a young war enthusiast, but is fully prepared to do his duty conscientiously and with absolute dedication.

Bardach arrives at the front in Glogowiec near Katowice (Poland) and is immediately confronted with the horrors of war. Three hundred men have fallen into a Russian ambush and been killed. On the other hand, the diary proudly documents the functioning of Austrian administration in an occupied Russian village. This introduction does not have sufficient space to reproduce accurately Bardach's route during the course of the war. In brief, it can be said that he was very rapidly confronted with war's realities, in the form of hundreds of badly wounded men, as stated in an entry on 24 August 1914, a sort of "baptism by fire." This strenuous effort exacted a cost. On 29 August 1914, Bardach writes: "I am completely exhausted, and also have severe stomach cramps." The war rapidly reveals what is to be expected on the other the side of simple war propaganda. Necessity for support by German troops, to maintain the front line against the Russians, is also made clear early on.

During the first few weeks of the war, the acculturated Jewish physician who has lived in large cities like Vienna, Graz, and Trieste, gets his first glimpse of the lives of the Jewish population of Eastern Europe during the war. The view of a physician like Bardach, fully integrated into big city life, is characterized by compassion but also by emotional distance:

The sight of the Jewish exodus from Rudniki is very moving. Very few are able to obtain some sort of conveyance, and there is no space for so many people. They lie in heaps one on top of the other. Most are old people, women, and children, who make the journey back—loaded with bundles—on foot. A picture of the greatest misery!

However, he sees "the Jews from Rudniki" with objective compassion and has long separated himself from this part of the East/Middle European Jewish community. He speaks of the "poor Jews" on the San, "who are terrified, pack

all their belongings, wring their hands at each thunder of the cannons, and run through the streets like madmen, bundles on their backs, not knowing where to go." Two things are apparent, perusing the photographs: first, an almost ethnological and dispassionate curiosity of the "exotic creatures" whom he sees; second, an extremely distanced and prosaic empathy, which is sometimes not detectable at all. Reciprocal cross-references between diary and photographs are unfortunately not present, and one often finds two separate emotional worlds between the photographer and the chronicler. Luckily, Bardach labeled all his photos, allowing added (though retrospective) insight into his war service.

The army allows Bardach to practice his faith and puts no obstacles in his way. The detailed entry of 7 October 1916 makes this abundantly clear:

Yom Kippur. By invitation from Chaplain Dr. Levi, I travel to Vladimir Volynsky [Ukraine] with the general's own car, taking Senior Physician Dr. Deutsch from the second division medical unit with me.

The journey takes one and a quarter hours; the weather is very unpleasant: overcast, rain at times. I spend the entire day in the synagogue in a place of honor next to Chaplain Dr. Levi with the exception of the afternoon pause from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., during which time I visit the local medical supply branch, to purchase supplies. I return to the synagogue and remain there until 5:30 p.m., at which time I return, arriving at command at 7:00 p.m. (The car remains at my disposal all day.) I fast easily and am not plagued by hunger. The sermon is much better than the one for New Year. The service was solemn and very good—an outstanding cantor—but the number of men was a lot smaller, only common soldiers and poor Russian Jews.

This excerpt explains a great deal: first, the self-evidence of religious practice, and acceptance of Jews in the Habsburg Army, which goes so far as to allow him to use the general's own car to travel to synagogue. One also sees Bardach's responsibility as a physician, in that he uses the afternoon break and the car to order medical supplies, for onward transportation to the front. He observes *some* religious commandments as a matter of course, by fasting. But at the same time, he clearly differentiates himself from "common soldiers," with whom the high-ranking surgeon major has no emotional connection. The Russian Jew remains to him an exotic and marginal figure.

Anti-Semitism did not pose any particular challenge to Bardach. Apparently he could humorously circumvent it. He writes about a dinner on 1 October 1915: "We are invited to dine there. The menu is simple but very good—I sit to the right of Dr. Raday, who is very friendly, but whose anti-Semitism does not seem to have changed much." The diary does not show any real outrage about small talk with an anti-Semite during dinner.

Bardach's war service decoration record is clearly set down in the archives. In December 1914, he was put up for the Knights Cross Award: the applica-

tion is based on his “cold-blooded personal commitment to performance of his medical duties under the most dangerous conditions.”¹³ In November 1915, Bardach was promoted to Oberstabsarzt II Klasse (with the rank of lieutenant colonel), and a few months later, he was again put up for a decoration: this time for his:

steadfast sense of duty and tireless activity including (but not limited to) organization of the medical corps. He has in many cases given valuable service as a devoted general physician. The fact that the troops—even when they entered the cholera-infested region of Kowel [Kovel, Ukraine]—were practically unaffected by infection, is entirely due to his constant care and supervision of all preventive hygienic measures.¹⁴

A final award proposal in September 1917 cites his “brave and steadfast behavior against the enemy.”¹⁵ He succeeded in containing the infectious diseases prevalent amongst the soldiers during the static warfare in Volhynia (region consisting of contiguous areas of Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus). Bardach’s nine military awards are preserved at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York and are digitally available for those interested. The main register page of his personal file in the war archives also lists these awards, together with his raised salary qualifications between 1915 and 1917.

Decoration proposals show that Bardach worked not only as a hospital organizer but also in the field of preventative medicine. Moreover, he provided medical care to the civilian population. As the diary entry of 30 July 1915 indicates, he has to pay a visit to a farmer’s wife to try and help with her difficult birth:

An arm has prolapsed and the head is stuck deep in the pelvis. Rotation impossible despite hours of trying, and no other surgical procedures are possible because of lack of instruments. Spontaneous birth around 11:00 p.m., but the infant is born dead.

On 16 August 1915:

There is quite a lot of cholera here; corpses pass along the road near me all the time. The civilians are mainly poor Jews. In addition to inoculation of the command baggage train, I also inoculate Assistant Physician Schwarz and, as far as my vaccine supplies last, the civilian population. The people crowd around me and must be held at arm’s length, by force if necessary. Women, men old and young, children as well—in total about four hundred are inoculated.

As far as can be gathered from his diary, Bardach was a dutiful and loyal subject of the Habsburg Monarchy. He served with great personal commitment but without any illusions about the nature of the war. At the outset, during his initial journey from Trieste to the front, he noted, (as has been mentioned):

“even if we are victorious, if it goes on like this, there will be mass murder and the destruction of untold numbers of lives.”

The diary contains an unusually complete account of the unfolding of the Brusilov Offensive in 1916, which exhausted both the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian armies. We can see from the diary that the Brusilov Offensive revealed the hopelessness of their situation: “terrible news from the front: unbelievable losses—whole battalions, especially of fortieth and eighty-second infantry regiments, have been trapped during the breakthrough, and trenches are filled with piles of corpses. My heart dies in my throat.” Bardach relates that the fourth army has lost forty thousand men during this offensive, and ten thousand from his original unit of eleven thousand. The turbulent pages of his diary during this period reveal his most difficult days at the front during the entire war.

The diary is generally sober and prosaic and, apart from the early period of the Brusilov Offensive, rarely reveals tumultuous emotions. However, the entry of 16 December 1914—early in the war—states:

The ride through the battlefields of the past four weeks reveals a picture of destruction horrible to behold. Whole heaps of Russian and Austrian bodies lie around everywhere. Endless amounts of war material. Churches and houses destroyed either by bombardment or burned down—a picture of misery and wretchedness!

By the time of the Brusilov Offensive in 1916, the true horror of war and hopelessness of the Austrian position has become all too obvious. Bardach is no longer convinced that the war can be won, but his loyal sense of duty and commitment—honed for decades in the army—does not budge.

The diary is seldom private. Bardach reports on his often-venturesome attempts to collect provisions for his family before he goes on leave, to alleviate their hunger in starving Vienna by bringing food along with him or sending it on ahead. His family plays a central role in the diary only once when, after the end of the Brusilov Offensive, he is finally granted leave and spends three weeks with his family between 14 October and 12 November 1916:

I find my family well, just thinner, especially my Olga. I can see her joy and happiness that I have arrived: she is very animated and will not leave my side—my dear, good wifey, affectionate as a little child. My eldest daughter, Bettina, has become a splendid, lively woman. Her thinner appearance looks very good on her, and she is both modest and lively. She fills me with joy. Ega is a pretty, dear young girl, still doesn't learn much but certainly knows more than she did last year and has made excellent progress in piano playing. She has real talent. Miki is a magnificent young girl, deft and agile, but always modest—she cozies up shamelessly against her Dad and is a real enfant terrible. My youngest daughter, Mary, is dear and sweet: actually, this is the first time I really see her. This sweet

little thing is very good, hardly cries at all, so that one does not even know that an eight-month-old baby is there.

These are the words of a classical patriarch: loving, but in charge of the five women in his Vienna family. His wife is described affectionately, but as a child-like, feminine being. He is not only the rooster in the henhouse but also the one who without doubt has the primary say in domestic affairs, despite his family having had to manage without him for such a long time. That his wife was twenty years his junior may have played a part in the unfolding of their conventional marriage.

Eight months pass before Bardach manages to get home leave, in summer 1917. In April 1918, he laboriously collects a package of family provisions to be delivered by his batman (including ten kilograms of bacon and four and a half kilograms of ham), without any guarantee that the goods would be delivered. In April 1918, Bardach is finally transferred from the former Eastern Front to the front lines in upper Italy, first to Montfalcone and finally to Portogruaro. During this time, a note of increased resignation appears in his diary. He cannot even pray on Yom Kippur, because of the daily realities of war.

On 20 September, Bardach, heavily laden with provisions (including no less than forty kilograms of flour) is able to visit his family in Vienna again. By that time, the Spanish flu has already gripped the city: luckily, his daughters become infected with just a light, passing fever. Soaring inflation complicates everyday activities on all levels.

Bardach experiences the last weeks of the war back at the Italian Front, where—as a senior officer—he is most struck by the weakness of the home front. He sees the army in the field as yet unconquered and is appalled at the Monarchy's inner decay. This is particularly striking, in that it shows the similarities between the thinking of a loyal Jewish Austrian and that of radical right-wing soldiers convinced that the war effort had been betrayed at home, by socialists and Jews. Bardach's mild version of the *Dolchstosslegende* (stab in the back myth) is a reflection of his innate patriotism, his conservative outlook, and his downcast attitude at the end of the war.

On 3 November, Bardach rejects entry into the Polish Army, despite his birth city of Lemberg, because he considers the Poles a corrupt and incompetent nation: "The Germans are not kindly disposed to the Jews but at least they are cultivated and assiduous and more honest, so I will join them." He decides clearly in favor of German national identity to what—after the fall of the Monarchy—is now called German-Austria (Deutsch-Österreich).

War's end finds him on the Italian Front, described prosaically in his diary: "So the war has ended for me, and I close my diary!!" He travels back to Vienna by train and reports immediately to the German-Austrian army. He has to travel to his appropriate military command in Graz to complete the necessary

admission formalities. On 20 November, he reports for duty at garrison hospital no. 1, but two days later is sent to a spa for treatment of his rheumatism, a result of his many years of strenuous service at the front. After his spa cure, he enters the private Clinic Finger for training as a specialist in skin and venereal diseases. So ends his nearly thirty years of military service.

Civilian Life

Adaptation to civilian life could not have been easy, but not because of his financial situation, which was comfortable. When Bardach finally retired from the army in 1920 as Oberstabsarzt I Klasse (colonel), after thirty-three years, two months, and twenty-nine days of active service, he was entitled, starting in 1921, to draw an old-age pension. Additionally, he obtained a salary from the Clinic Finger, and after the end of his training, he opened a private practice in Vienna (about which we unfortunately have no documentation).

But first his citizenship had to be clarified. As prescribed at the end of the Habsburg Monarchy, he had the right to claim Lemberg, his birthplace, as home. However, on 1 November 1918, the West Ukrainian People's Republic was established. Civil war followed. After three weeks, Polish troops entered Lemberg and a bloody pogrom against the Jewish population followed. Self-evidently, he neither could nor wanted to return there.

Vienna became the center of their lives. Bardach worked in the demobilization center for returning soldiers of the German-Austrian army until 1 August 1920.¹⁶ On 1 January 1920, he was promoted to the next pay level. On 21 December 1918, he had already handed in his declaration of citizenship to the district magistrate in the seventh district of Vienna, stating that he wished to belong to, and be, a loyal citizen of the Republic of German-Austria.¹⁷

Many Viennese were filled with mistrust of Jews from Eastern Europe who now wished to remain. Other biographies indicate that bribery was often necessary for them to obtain Austrian citizenship. In Bardach's case, there is no indication that this was the case. However, perhaps this is why it took until 7 June 1920, when he and his family obtained permission from the provincial government of Lower Austria for right of residence and Austrian citizenship. On 30 June 1930, his provisional pension payments were changed to regular retirement benefits by the Ministry of Defense.

Meanwhile, the children grew up and flew the coop into the wider world. The eldest immigrated to the United States in 1922 and, when Miki did the same in 1939, she was the third Bardach daughter who had chosen to live in America. Miki had studied at the Reimann School of Art and Design in Berlin, and a notable career as editor and designer lay before her.¹⁸ It's thanks to her that the Bardach Collection was gifted to the Leo Baeck Institute in New

York. When Miki Denhof died in 2000 at the age of eighty-eight, the *New York Times* issue of 8 June 2000 dedicated an extensive obituary to her, with recognition of her artistic achievements. It also highlighted the donation of her father's collection to the Leo Baeck Institute.

One of the daughters went to Italy, married in Florence, and survived World War II hiding in the Abruzzi. Olga and Bernhard Bardach experienced the end of the Austrian Republic alone; by that time, Bernhard was already sixty-two. They attempted to live in Vienna through early 1939, so as not to give up all they owned. But by then the situation had become intolerable, and emigration was the only option—in their case, tantamount to expulsion from their homeland.

Humiliation

Bardach's lifelong medical service, including his service in uniform and in the field on the side of the Central Powers during the war, counted for absolutely nothing after the Anschluss. Incorporation of Austria into the German Reich meant that they, together with the other two hundred thousand Jews of Vienna, were excluded from the Volk. The lengths to which this ostracism would go were not yet clear, but living in Austria had become practically impossible.

Olga and Bernhard, who at the time were living in 62 Kaiserstrasse, seventh district, submitted a departure application to allow them to join their daughters in the United States, and so the chicanery began. Both were required to hand in a list of the private articles that they wanted to take with them to the Vienna foreign currency office in Teinfaltstrasse. Obviously, no articles of value could be included: even Bardach's military service medals had to be stamped "not made of precious metals" by the authorities. Bardach listed 151 objects, among these about thirty-six handkerchiefs and fourteen pairs of underpants. Olga had only thirty objects, including three packages of letters from her children. With very few exceptions—such as these letters—the list comprises only articles of clothing, and nothing of value. They signed a letter confirming that they had neither property nor debts in Austria, and no property out of the country. The lists were handed in on 26 April 1939, with a "provisional" departure date for the United States of 2 May.¹⁹

On 2 May, Bardach informed the pension office in Vienna, that he had requested his bank—Creditanstalt Bankverein—to open a special account to facilitate further pension deposits. The settlement was still outstanding, because the bank required disclosure of the exact deposit amount from the pension office:

I hereby inform the pension office that I am still awaiting approval from the bank, and that I will be leaving Germany in the next few days, with an interme-

diary stop in Florence with, once visa formalities have been completed, further travel to the USA.²⁰

From Italy, Bardach tried unsuccessfully to control his financial affairs. The authority wrote tersely:

The Jew has left Reich territory. The Vienna foreign currency office has approved payment into a special account until 31 March 1940. The authorized payee has not yet submitted official notification of the authorized opening of this account at Österreichischer Creditanstalt Wiener Bankverein. Therefore, no reason for the establishment of a special account exists, and pension payment will cease from 1 June.

This is followed, thickly underlined, by “until he reports in person.”²¹ Bardach would have had to return to Vienna to deal further with this issue. On 8 July, the Vienna pension office demanded that the pension payment be returned by the bank, writing: “The Vienna pension office has erroneously paid out a pension benefit in the amount of RM 582.66 into the special account of the Jew Dr. Bernhard Bardach. Bardach is out of the country without the permission of the Ministry of External Affairs, and the money must therefore be returned.”²²

Bardach sent two separate letters—one typed, one handwritten—from Viareggio to the Senior Finance Presidium in Vienna on 6 September 1939, again requesting payment of the previously approved sums.²³ The Gestapo had already informed the pension office on 22 September that they had “no objections to the Jew Dr. Bernhard Bardach changing his place of residence.”²⁴ However, all forms of payment—no matter how small—were consistently refused, and Bernhard and Olga fled from Italy via Portugal to New York, finally arriving in 1941, without a penny in their pockets.

Compensation?

There was obviously no hope of financial compensation for the Bardach family from National Socialist Germany. But after their comprehensive defeat, the breakup of the Habsburg Empire, and the establishment of the Austrian Republic, one could hope that new life would be breathed into their old pension claims. However, this was to take time.

Eleven months after war’s end, Bardach addressed a clearly handwritten letter to the “War Ministry”:

With respect to the renewal of my pension payments, I report that my last payment in the amount of RM 296.33 occurred on 1 May 1939. Since then, despite repeated valid requests, I have received nothing.

I therefore request retroactive renewal of my pension payments. These are needed all the more because as an eighty-year-old man I am unable to practice my profession anymore, and am totally dependent on charitable support from my family.²⁵

A letter from the Ministry of Finance dated 14 October (only received on 10 December) informed Bardach that his pension had been canceled in 1939, “because you left the country.”²⁶ This elicited a clearer and even more emotional response: Bardach wrote that he had been forced to emigrate “with only RM 10 in my pocket.” All promises to pay his pension into a blocked account had been broken, “despite my urgent requests, repeated so many times that they have worn me out.” He continued:

I, who served my Fatherland faithfully for a total of thirty-two years in war and peace, have had to live for the past seven years on the charity of my two unmarried, unprovided-for daughters, who must work very hard indeed to provide our daily bread. From the days of my youth, I have avoided being a burden on anyone; but now, as a retired Austrian officer, I do not possess a single cent to call my own.²⁷

On 31 March 1946, Bernhard Bardach became a naturalized American citizen. But he didn’t have much longer to live, and died in 1947 of a myocardial infarct. Existing documents put the date of his death at 6 June 1947.

It took until 1955 before attorney Dr. Odelga in Vienna successfully took up the financial interests of the Bardach family in Vienna. From 1 October 1955, Olga received a monthly widow’s benefit of 1,355.70 schillings; her widow’s pension claim from 1950 to 1955 was also paid into an Austrian blocked account. However, Bernhard received no retroactive reparation: “Because, at the time he acquired American citizenship, he did not possess pension authorization during his residence overseas, his pension benefits have lapsed.”²⁸ The cynicism of Austrian officials about Jewish expulsion, even a decade after war’s end, is obvious. Overseas residence forfeited pension claims. What “overseas residence” really meant for the Bardach family, played no role in the argument whatsoever. Neither did the fact that had he remained in Vienna, he would have been subject to deportation and extermination. “Overseas residence” meant staying alive, and that was the bureaucratic sticking point in providing him with the pension he so evidently deserved. The bureaucratic shadow of the Holocaust continued to darken Jewish lives long after the end of the war.

Olga Bardach died on 25 August 1968. The Central Pensions Office wrote laconically that the daughter, Miki Denhof, was entitled to a pension balance of 1,044.30 schillings, less court costs.²⁹ A disgraceful chapter in the history of postwar Austria thus came to an end.

Both international and Austrian research are today able to enjoy the wonderful components of the Bardach collection at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, and through them obtain ever newer and deeper insights on the history of World War I, especially the war on the Eastern Front. However, the history behind these documents must not be forgotten. The life of Bernhard Bardach and his family, described here in broad terms, demonstrates the fate of people on whom deep wounds were inflicted by the politics of Austria (including Austria both under National Socialism and after its downfall). Bernhard Bardach's loyalty to the state, demonstrated by decades of military service, in the end came to nothing.

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Notes

1. The diaries comprise six volumes of clearly written German Gothic cursive. They are available in digital form on the Leo Baeck Institute New York homepage, archive no. AR 6632.
2. See Jay Winter, *War beyond Words: Language of Remembrance from the Great War to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 49–53.
3. Tanja Grössing, *Der Bleistift zitterte und das Herz zitterte, als dieses Manuskript entstand: Untersuchungen der Kriegstagebücher von Egon Erwin Kisch und Bernhard Bardach*, MA thesis, University of Graz, 2015.
4. Personal file of Bernhard Bardach, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Vienna. I thank Frau Archivdirektorin Renate Dommanich for competent assistance during my examination of the extensive material.
5. I thank Professor Doctor Alois Kernbauer, Director of the Graz University Archives, most sincerely for placing Bardach's examination details at my disposal.
6. On Lemberg and Lvov, see Philippe Sands, *East-West Street: On the Origins of "Genocide" and "Crimes against Humanity"* (New York: Knopf, 2016).
7. Birth certificate in Bardach personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
8. Examination file, Graz University Archives.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
11. Service assessment of Surgeon-Major Dr. Bernhard Bardach, 1911, *Kriegsarchiv*.
12. Grössing, *Der Bleistift zitterte*, 29.
13. Decoration proposal of 30 December 1914 in personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
14. Decoration proposal of 20 December 1915 in personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
15. Decoration proposal of 25 September 1915 in personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
16. Confirmation in provisional Austrian personnel files of medical corps company 1, Vienna of 6 November 1920. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.

17. Citizenship declaration of Dr. Bernhard Bardach, 21 December 1918. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
18. “Miki G. Denhof Née Bardach, Editor and Designer,” in *Biographia, Lexicon österreichischer Frauen*, vol. 1 A-H, Vienna, 2016, 574.
19. Application to the Vienna foreign currency office of 26 April 1939 submitted by Bernhard and Olga Bardach. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
20. Letter from Bardach to the pension office, Vienna, 2 May 1939. Personal file, *Staatsarchiv*.
21. Handwritten decision on the request by Bernhard Bardach on 16 May 1939. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
22. Letter from sixteenth pension bureau in Vienna to Austrian Creditanstalt, Wiener Bankverein, Filiale Westbahnstraße, 8 July 1939. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
23. Two identically worded letters, one typed the other handwritten, from Bardach to the Vienna *Oberfinanzpräsidium*, section 7b, 6 September 1939 from Viareggio, Italy. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
24. Letter from Gestapo, Staatspolizeileitstelle Vienna, to pension office of 22 August 1939. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
25. Handwritten letter from “Oberstabsarzt Dr. Bernhard Bardach, New York, 740 West 187th Street” to the Austrian War Ministry, 9 April 1946. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.
26. Letter from the Ministry of Finance Zl 109.585/46—pension section B, to Dr. Bernhard Bardach, New York, 14 October 1946. Personal file *Kriegsarchiv*.
27. Letter from Dr. Bernhard Bardach, New York to the Ministry of Finance in Vienna 12 December 1946. Personal file *Kriegsarchiv*.
28. Letter from Ministry of Finance to the central pensions Office, June, 1954. Personal file *Kriegsarchiv*.
29. Correspondence from Central Pay Office to the Regional Court of Central Vienna, 8 November 1918. Decision and attachments to Mrs. M Denhof. Personal file, *Kriegsarchiv*.