

Friedrich Zweigelt as reflected by contemporary sources¹

By Dr. Daniel Deckers (Article from: “Wine in Austria: The History”)

In 1937, Dr. Fritz Zweigelt, editor of the journal “Das Weinland”, celebrated 25 years at the Federal Institute and Experimental Station of Viticulture, Fruit Production and Horticulture in Klosterneuburg near Vienna. “As a teacher at the school in Klosterneuburg, he inspires his audience,”² wrote Zweigelt’s companion and friend Albert Stummer. “He saw introducing his listeners to nature as being more than the mere imparting of knowledge. It should also be mentioned that he was guided by the muses from the cradle onwards. His achievements in the fields of painting, poetry and music, modest on the surface, extend well beyond the amateur level.” But this is not all. Stummer was giving an involuntary indication of why it came to pass that a man who had “captured everyone’s hearts” went on to be arrested in 1945, charged with treason, warmongering and denunciation. The headline for Stummer’s paean was a quotation borrowed from Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s autobiographical work “Poetry and Truth”: “An active spirit gains a foothold everywhere.”

Friedrich “Fritz” Zweigelt was born on 13 January 1888 in Hitzendorf, a village located around 15 kilometres from the Styrian capital of Graz.³ His father Franz Xaver Zweigelt came from the small town of Schönlinde (Krásná Lipá) in northern Bohemia, whilst his mother Antonia (née Kotyza) originated from Fürstenfeld in East Styria.⁴ Friedrich, born just over eighteen

¹ One of the items discovered during the researches was a personal file on Friedrich Zweigelt first opened in 1912, to the extent that this was retained by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture in Vienna (ÖMinLW), now known as the Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism (referred to below as the ÖMinLW personal file). Further investigations in the Austrian State Archives (ÖStA) and in the German Federal Archives (BArch) in Berlin-Lichterfelde revealed important supplementary information, in particular concerning the act of clemency. Zweigelt’s “Volksgericht” records (a separate court that existed in Austria between 1945 and 1955 for the purpose of prosecuting crimes committed during the Nazi period) are still fully intact in the Vienna City and State Archives. They are also evaluated here for the first time.

² Stummer, Albert: Dr. Zweigelt – 25 Jahre in Klosterneuburg, in: *Das Weinland* 9 (1937), pp. 41–43.

³ The history of the final decades of the Habsburg Monarchy, of the Republic of Austria, of the years between 1938 and 1945 and of the restoration of the republic will only be mentioned insofar as directly conducive to gaining an understanding of Zweigelt’s life and influence. For a summary of this period of history, see Vocelka, Karl: *Österreichische Geschichte* (Munich, 3rd edition 2010).

⁴ Regarding these and following statements, cf. various papers contained in Zweigelt’s personal file (ÖMinLW).

months after his parents' marriage, was to remain the couple's only son. As far as religious affiliation is concerned, a hand written curriculum vitae dating to the year 1912⁵ notes that he, like all his paternal and maternal forebears, was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. After the occupation of Austria by the National Socialists in 1938, Zweigelt nevertheless contended that he never possessed a true inner commitment to the Catholic Church, maintaining instead that his "strictly progressive, anti-clerical" and "strongly nationalist" father "raised him to rail against the incursions of clericalism from an early age."⁶

Zweigelt's propensity for the natural sciences is documented at an early stage. In 1912, we read that he was wont to take an interest in investigating the world of insects from the very start of his time at grammar school. This led to the creation of collections and to the pursuit of zoological studies.⁷ After passing his upper secondary school leaving certificate "with distinction" in 1907, he studied zoology and botany at the University of Graz and proceeded to take a doctorate there in the summer of 1911. Zweigelt was clearly a gifted and ambitious young scientific researcher. Less than a year later, on 1 March 1912, he commenced employment at the Botanical Test Laboratory and Laboratory for Plant Diseases at the Imperial and Royal Higher School of Viticulture and Fruit Production in Klosterneuburg near Vienna, an institute which was originally founded in 1860 and has undergone several restructurings since.⁸

Zweigelt gained official civil servant status on 5 March 1913. He married the Graz-born Friederike Hochmuth on 14 August 1913, and the birth of his only child Rudolf followed three years later. Looking back, Fritz described the initial time he spent in Klosterneuburg by stating that the work he did there brought him the "best years of his life".⁹

⁵ Cf. ÖMinLW personal file.

⁶ Cf. Volksgericht Vienna Department 1h, criminal case Dr. Friedrich Zweigelt, Az Vg 2e Vr 3281/84 (Vienna City and State Archives).

⁷ Cf. ÖMinLW personal file. See also Zweigelt, Friedrich: Von den Höhepunkten meines Lebens – Werk und Freude, in: Zeitschrift für angewandte Entomologie 54 (1964), pp. 13–21, here p. 13.

⁸ Cf. Denkschrift zur 70-jährigen Bestandfeier der Höheren Bundes-Lehranstalt und Bundesversuchsstation für Wein- Obst- und Gartenbau in Klosterneuburg. Klosterneuburg, October 1930, edited by Fritz Zweigelt, published by "Das Weinland", and the article by Josef Weiss in the present volume.

⁹ In March 1938, Zweigelt boasted that he had helped with the "national education" of young people from the very beginning of his time at the Klosterneuburg School. He provided evidence of this by pointing to an occasion during the summer of war of 1916 when he had delivered the "fireside address" at the solstice celebrations in Klosterneuburg. The idea was evidently to paint him in the colours of a populist, nationalist and decidedly anti-clerical scientist (Volksgericht Vienna Department 1h, criminal case Dr. Friedrich Zweigelt, Az Vg 2e Vr 3281/84).

Zweigelt did not devote any attention to oenological issues during his initial years as a scientific researcher. In 1921, however, he assumed the remit of Professor Linsbauer, under whom he had worked, when the latter was promoted to become Head of the Institute. This task area included lecturing in applied entomology and plant pathology, but Zweigelt also succeeded Linsbauer, who had been calling for the establishment of a separate Austrian system of grape cultivation since 1914,¹⁰ as head of a new Viticulture Station.

This was an area of activity in which the young Austrian Republic was just starting out. For many various reasons, it did not wish to be dependent on the state grape cultivation stations that existed in Germany (such as Alzey, Naumburg and Würzburg). The range of wines was too different,¹¹ as were the requirements made of the grapes by the soils and climate. Zweigelt, however, also saw holding his own against such a major wine producing nation located to the north of Austria as a matter of honour. From the very outset, Zweigelt did not merely put his faith in improving traditional domestic grape varieties both quantitatively and qualitatively by pursuing a policy of so-called selective cultivation of existing vines.¹² Writing in 1927, he stated: “The fact is that none of the usual varieties found in this country are satisfactory in every regard. Either the harvest is not good enough or, and this applies to the finer varieties in particular, the grapes ripen too late. Susceptibility to rotting also jeopardises the yield every year.”¹³ For this reason, Zweigelt also began to engage in cross cultivation in order to increase both yields and quality. Entry 71 of the cultivation records for 1922 shows a cross between St. Laurent and Blaufränkisch. The aims were to achieve early ripeness and quality.

Federal vine cultivation was, however, also focused on acquiring new table grape varieties. In addition to this, Zweigelt also collaborated closely with the Moravian Wine Growing Inspector Albert Stummer to investigate so-called production hybrids or *hybrides producteurs directes*. These were hybrids of European and American vines which, since the time of the Habsburg

¹⁰ Cf. Weiss, Josef: Anfänge der staatlichen Rebenzüchtung in Österreich, in: Mitteilungen Klosterneuburg 65 (2015), pp. 1–10.

¹¹ The white wine varieties of Riesling and Silvaner, crucial to the quality wine growing regions in Germany, were uncommon in Austria. Green Veltliner, which was an important variety for Austria, was virtually unknown in Germany.

¹² Cf. Allgemeine Wein-Zeitung 40 (1923), Issue 9, p. 61 f.

¹³ Zweigelt, Fritz: Die Züchtung von Rebsorten in Oesterreich, in: Wein und Rebe 6, 1927 (special edition published by the German National Library, DNB).

Monarchy, had spread from France across the whole of South-East Europe in several waves and had also become established in Alsace, the Palatinate and Baden¹⁴.

Most experts harboured reservations regarding these vines because of their high acid and alcohol content. The wines themselves also had an unpleasant “foxy” taste due to the presence of methyl anthranilate. Nevertheless, the American gene contained in the hybrids offered the benefit that they were immune or largely resistant to plant pests introduced from North America in the form of mildew, downy mildew and American phylloxera. At the beginning of the 1920s, the idea that vine cultivation could be used as a vehicle to eliminate some of the disadvantages of direct producers and to launch plants which could be good for “mass yields in lesser vineyard locations” had not been rejected. Zweigelt and his assistant Paul Steingruber thus hybridised European vines and also cross-bred direct producers with one another and with pure vines.¹⁵

Zweigelt backed up this experimentation with numerous trips and lectures. Having been appointed editor of the “Allgemeine Wein-Zeitung” in 1923 in his capacity as Head of Federal Vine Cultivation, he also soon began to use the journal to emerge as a highly productive author of essays and reviews.¹⁶ He further served as the secretary to a new “Vine Cultivation Committee”, which was made up of experts and specialist civil servants. This function enabled him to become a member of the “Austrian Viticulture Committee”, which was constituted on 16 February 1928, not least as a result of his own endeavours.¹⁷ Finally, a new “Association of Austrian Vine Growers” was formed for the purpose of securing the results of the selection works carried out.

All in all, Zweigelt was the most productive oenologist and most important promoter of wine growing policy in the First Republic. Amongst his colleagues in Klosterneuburg, he was the person who was best able to assess developments in European viticulture. Zweigelt undertook a study trip to Germany as early as 1921. Whilst there, he initiated contacts with the mostly state-employed scientific researchers who were involved with looking at issues relating to vine selection and (cross)breeding of pure and rootstock vines.

¹⁴ Cf. the travel report of Wine Growing Inspector Albert Stummer (Znaim) on “Direktträgerkultur und Rebenzucht in Baden und Württemberg” in: *Allgemeine Weinzeitung* 43 (1926), pp. 311–313.

¹⁵ For further detail, cf. Zweigelt (as note 13).

¹⁶ “Vine cultivation is not merely one of the most important issues for modern viticulture. In the opinion of a leading German wine growing expert, it is *the* pivotal question.” *Allgemeine Wein-Zeitung* 40 (1923), 1 (53).

¹⁷ Cf. the relevant records in the Austrian State Archives.

The peace agreements concluded in Paris in 1919 brought about the end of the Habsburg Monarchy and led to the drawing of new borders in Central and South-East Europe. They were also a watershed for the Klosterneuburg School and the teaching staff employed there. Klosterneuburg was no longer a hub of research and teaching for Central Europe which extended its influence far into the South-East of the continent. Zweigelt was not prepared to accept this loss of significance.¹⁸ As one of four co-editors of the “Allgemeine Wein-Zeitung” and via a subsequent journal entitled “Das Weinland”, of which he had sole charge, he repeatedly stressed the importance of the “great mission” of the Klosterneuburg School “which has taken on the legacy of Babo and must not cease to move forwards and work tirelessly to retain its international standing.”¹⁹ The radius of the activities undertaken by Zweigelt was correspondingly wide. 1927 saw him represent his country at two viticulture congresses in Conegliano in Italy²⁰ and in the German town of Bad Dürkheim. At both conferences, Zweigelt delivered keynote addresses on a topic which was very much the bone of contention during these years. This was the “question of production hybrids in northern wine growing”.²¹ In 1929, he and his friend Stummer appended their signature to the preface of a 420-page book highlighting every facet of the direct producer issue. “Stummer/Zweigelt” appeared at just the right moment politically. Representatives from European wine growing countries convened in Bucharest in 1929. One of the agreements reached was that direct producer planting should be forbidden in regions suitable for quality wine.²² A turning point in the hybrid issue had now been reached.

Major political events did not disturb Zweigelt’s spheres of activity. Not even the end of the first Republic and the establishment of the clerical and Austro-Fascist regime under Dollfuß and Schuschnigg exerted an effect. Although the “Weinland” carried a death notice on its front cover following the murder of Dollfuß on 25 July 1934, the tone of this obituary did not suggest

¹⁸ Speaking on the occasion of a ceremony held to mark the 50th anniversary of Klosterneuburg in 1924, Linsbauer recalled that during these five decades the institute had been attended by 80 Czecho-Slovaks, 90 Yugoslavians, 126 Italians, 20 Bulgarians, 26 Russians, 18 German Empire citizens, 2 Poles, 5 Turks, 15 Romanians and 16 representatives of other nations. *Allgemeine Wein-Zeitung* 41 (1924), p. 357.

¹⁹ *Die Babo-Feier*, special edition of the “Allgemeine Wein-Zeitung” No. 20 of 25 October 1927 (DNB); cf. also Zweigelt, Friedrich: *Führende Männer des deutschen Weinbaus*. Wilhelm Freiherr von Babo, in: *Weinbau und Kellerwirtschaft* 4 (1922).

²⁰ Cf. the report by Zweigelt in: *Allgemeine Wein-Zeitung* 44 (1927), pp. 188–190.

²¹ *Allgemeine Weinzeitung* 44 (1927), pp. 347, 381, 395, 416.

²² Zweigelt, Friedrich: *Die Ertragshybriden und ihre Bedeutung für den europäischen Weinbau*, in: *Internationale Landwirtschaftliche Rundschau*. I. Teil: *Agrikulturwissenschaftliche Monatsschrift*, Rome, March 1939, No. 3.

any great degree of consternation. Zweigelt became a member of the Austrian NSDAP in May 1933 without making much fuss of the matter. After all, he was also a member of the “Schlaraffia”, a male society founded in Prague in 1859. Organised in local clubs called “Reychs”, this association devoted itself to the nurturing of art and humour and thus also incurred the mistrust of the National Socialists. Nevertheless, it is not possible to allay the suspicion that Zweigelt became part of a clandestine National Socialist network in Klosterneuburg at an early stage. As a civil servant, he had been compelled to be a member of the Fatherland Front since 1934. In 1936, however, he joined the (banned) National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation (NSBO).²³

In the spring of 1938, anyone wondering about Zweigelt’s thoughts on the latest political changes did not have to wait long. At the end of March, in his capacity as Head of Federal Vine Cultivation, Zweigelt composed an editorial which appeared under the headline of “Austria has returned to the great German Homeland”. The author’s subservience to the Hitler Regime and his disdain for the old “system” were in no doubt. “Adolf Hitler, the Führer of us all, has saved his home country. Only those who have suffered the infinite pain and terrible subjugation of an alien system over a period of five long and bitter years will be able to appreciate what we Austrians have felt and experienced during these great days. We Germans of the Ostmark, accustomed to fighting for centuries, have turned into steel during those years. We have endured until an hour of liberation that is significant to the whole of world history.”²⁴

Zweigelt, who in 1937 had published no fewer than three articles marking his own 50th birthday in the journal he edited,²⁵ was not the only prominent person who was scarcely able to await the seizure of power by the National Socialists. Robert Schlumberger Edler von Goldeck, editor of the “Neue Wein-Zeitung”, also did not hesitate for long.²⁶ Other Austrians expressed almost boundless enthusiasm in a special “Ostmark” edition of the Mainz-based journal “Der Deutsche Weinbau” published on 10 July 1938. The National Socialist Minister of Agriculture and State Peasant Leader Anton Reinthaller gave free rein to anti-Jewish agitation.²⁷ Franz Wobisch, a

²³ Federal Ministry of Justice (BMJ), Section IV, VI-d, 31.212-49 (ÖStA). In Germany, the NSBO was absorbed into the German Labour Front (DAF) in 1935.

²⁴ Das Weinland 10 (1938), p. 65.

²⁵ Franz Gombach’s article even used the word “Übermensch”. Ibid., p. 47

²⁶ Neue Wein-Zeitung 31 (1938), No. 23, p. 1.

²⁷ “The year 1937 brought a prime example of how Jewish wine traders were able to deprive vintners of the wage due for their work. By spreading reports about the coming harvest, they managed to depress the wine price to a low level that did not reflect producer costs in the slightest, make wine stocks virtually unsaleable and strike fear and terror into the vintners ... this made the situation ripe to “do business”. Quotation from: Der Deutsche Weinbau 17

wine growing expert who was also Head of Cellar Inspection at the Ministry of Agriculture in Vienna,²⁸ developed a programme to enable Austrian viticulture to catch up with that in the “old Reich”, i.e. Germany.²⁹ The views expressed in his article thus tied in with those put forward by “Councillor Dr. Fritz Zweigelt-Klosterneuburg”. The latter’s dream of “being able to lead Klosterneuburg in noble competition with its German sister institutes” seemed to have become reality.³⁰

The new rulers did not meet any resistance in the wine sector. The complaints of the vintners died away after only a few months. A procurement campaign by the Reichsnährstand (agricultural and food production regulation body) had emptied the cellars.³¹ The German and Austrian National Socialists also made short work of Jewish wine traders and retailers.³² The publishing house Bondy, which had produced Zweigelt’s “Weinland” since 1929 and was Jewish owned (according to the interpretation of the National Socialists), was presumably also aryanised. The journal itself was integrated into the empire of magazines run from Berlin by the Reichsnährstand. Zweigelt was officially appointed editor-in-chief with effect from 11 November 1939.³³

The question as to the capacity in which the Head of Federal Vine Cultivation of many years’ standing should work on the realisation of his long-cherished dream tuned into an almost never-ending story. The Klosterneuburg local NSDAP Group had instantly appointed Zweigelt as Head of the Institute during the weekend when German troops had marched into Austria.

(1938), p. 389. Reinthaller, who was from Upper Austria, went on to become the first Party President of the FPÖ in 1956.

²⁸ Franz Wobisch (1884–1964) was “close to the movement” in the 1930s. On 1 January 1941, he became member number 8465983 of the NSDAP (Austrian State Archives, ÖStA, district file 164.905 Franz Wobisch – Archive of the Republic (AdR) section 135). Wobisch maintained in 1945 that he had never actually joined the NSDAP and had always remained a candidate for membership. In 1948, he was deemed to be a “lesser offender” (ÖMinLW personal file).

²⁹ “Zu neuer Arbeit”, *Der Deutsche Weinbau* 17 (1938), pp. 391–393.

³⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 397–399, here p. 399. A photograph showed the “flags of the Third Reich” hoisted at the school’s building for the first time. The Ostmark saga reached its culmination with an unprecedented anti-Semitic attack by Robert Schlumberger. “Wine doctoring began once the Jews penetrated the wine sector.” Schlumberger stated that sales had fallen during the economic crisis and that dishonest manipulations by Jews “allowed them to engage in price slashing which brought about a life and death competitive struggle.” (p. 400)

³¹ *Das Weinland* 14 (1938), p. 207 (Wobisch).

³² Cf. various indications *ibid.*, p. 209 (Wobisch) and p. 307 (companies Maximilian Schepper, Tehag, Bondy und Sohn). No detailed investigation of the aryanisation of the Austrian wine trade has yet been carried out.

³³ Supplementary sheet to the civil service appointment file (ÖMinLW personal file).

However, Minister of Agriculture Reinthaller only named Zweigelt as Acting Director with effect from 14 March³⁴. This was despite the fact that the incumbent Head Bretschneider had been seriously ill for almost a year, meaning that official business was being conducted on an interim basis by Ludwig Stefl. But Zweigelt did not even become Director following Bretschneider's death on 30 June 1938.

Zweigelt's ambitions were not, however, merely foiled by NS bureaucracy in Berlin. He encountered resistance in Austria too. On 11 April 1938, Zweigelt completed a typed "memorandum" to Reinthaller, the tenor of which had been clear for some weeks. "Necessary but successful rejuvenation by making drastic cuts will need to be a first step towards approaching the objectives set ... Klosterneuburg can, must and will return to its previous greatness and will be worthy of its current mission in the Greater German Reich."³⁵ For this purpose, Zweigelt spent the next few weeks collating all kinds of detrimental information, particularly concerning the "clerical" or "Christian Socialist" professors Ludwig Stefl, Julius Kloss, Emil Planckh and Victor Reich. Objective criticism of colleagues whom he considered to be unproductive and victims of alcohol addiction in some instances³⁶ were mixed in with accusations of ideological unreliability. In the case of Planckh und Reich, he based this notion on the fact that they were converts to National Socialism.

Zweigelt was fully aware that a cleansing measure of such magnitude threatened to shut down teaching operations. For this reason, the intention was that the dismissals would not take place until the summer, i.e. after the end of the school year. He had already arrived at a decision in spring as to whom he wished to acquire to fill the new vacancies in autumn. Teachers would need to be up to the mark technically, and "on the other hand, their previous conduct would need to offer a guarantee [...] that they were able to teach and lead within the spirit of National Socialism."³⁷ To this end, the intention was that the Klosterneuburg graduate and National Socialist Heinrich Konlechner, who had risen to become Federal Cellar Inspector, should take Stefl's place. The biologist and SS member Otto Kramer from Weinsberg in Württemberg

³⁴ ÖMinLW personal file. The files accessed thus far do not reveal whether Reinthaller and Zweigelt were in personal contact prior to the coup.

³⁵ Records of the Federal Institute of Viticulture and Fruit Production in Klosterneuburg (HBLA). Within this context, Zweigelt maintained on several occasions that he was also being forced into the approach he was adopting by the institute's alumni association.

³⁶ Starting in 1933, Zweigelt kept a list of who failed to turn up for work and when (HBLA records).

³⁷ Submission to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of 16 April, p. 2 (Volksgericht file).

(Germany) was to relocate to Austria “in order to ensure that the disciplines mentioned are quickly elevated to the level of the rest of Germany.”³⁸

Zweigelt was not the only person hatching plans for the future of Klosterneuburg. In June 1938, the professors whom Zweigelt wished to force out of the institute, together with the new NSDAP member Prohaska, disseminated a submission in party and government circles in a bid to make Zweigelt “impossible as a temporary director.”³⁹ The essential accusation levelled at Zweigelt was that he had been a member of the “Schlaraffia”. The fact that Zweigelt had exhibited “a friendly attitude towards Jews” several times and his editorship of *Das Weinland*, “a journal published by Jews”, were also intended to invoke a detrimental impression. All of this could mean only one thing: “The view of well-informed party and professional circles is that the political and personal attitude of Dr. Z. under the previous regime appears to make him unsuitable to lead the School of Viticulture and Fruit Production in accordance with National Socialist ideals.”⁴⁰

At a meeting with the District Peasant Leader Rudolf Benesch at the end of June, Zweigelt gained the impression that the arguments of the “counter side” were being taken seriously.⁴¹ He defended himself as “the only man – and I am arrogant enough to say this – who has upheld Klosterneuburg throughout all the years, who has worked internationally and has thus latterly firmly established the institute in international science.” He stated that he had pushed the others into the background professionally, with the result that several of them “must now justifiably fear that this Zweigelt could become Director and that this could lead to a dangerous situation for the others.” Once again, Zweigelt was able to assert himself. At the beginning of the new school year, there was no longer any sign in Klosterneuburg of the colleagues whom Zweigelt had booted out.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁹ The existing files unfortunately do not contain the original submission, which was directed to the Ministry of Agriculture, to the District Administration Office of the NSDAP in Vienna and to several other (unnamed) places in Berlin. The accusations have been reconstructed from parallel records.

⁴⁰ This letter to Waechter, who became State Commissioner on 24 May 1938, cannot be precisely dated. The copy which has survived in the personal file (ÖMinLW) is dated 21 December 1939.

⁴¹ Zweigelt to Benesch, Klosterneuburg, 26 June 1938 (HBLA records).

⁴² This outcome is also mentioned in: *Festschrift und Almanach. 100 Jahre Verband der Klosterneuburger Oenologen und Pomologen* (Klosterneuburg 2011), p. 114. Zweigelt to the retired district leader Slupetzky (HBLA records).

None of these conflicts was discernible from outside. From August 1938, *Das Weinland* was issued by a new publishing house. As editor, Zweigelt maintained his usual presence by producing scientific treatises and editorials. In the autumn of 1938, he enthusiastically welcomed the occupation of the Sudetenland⁴³ and adopted the same tone in extolling the outbreak of war in autumn 1939.⁴⁴

An unusual event occurred near the Augustinian Monastery of Klosterneuburg in June 1940. The Augustinian canon regular Roman Scholz, founder of the Austrian Freedom Movement, was arrested. No one at the monastery seemed unduly concerned. If there were fears, these were directed less at Scholz and more at the fact that the Gestapo might have a new lever that would enable them to acquire the monastery.⁴⁵ The arrest of Scholz has not left any direct traces in the files relating to Zweigelt's tenure at Klosterneuburg. Nevertheless, the faculty was forced to deal with this event almost two months later to the extent that the membership of the "Austrian Freedom Movement", which numbered around 300, included one of the institute's pupils. The minutes of the meeting⁴⁶ state that temporary director Zweigelt began by notifying the faculty that "an illegal clerical affair" had been discovered in Klosterneuburg, "in which pupils from our institute are also involved. The pupil Josef Bauer is one of the persons who have been arrested in this context." Josef Bauer was a plant protection technician who had been born in Vienna in 1920. Kramer reported that the boy's father had sent word that his son had been detained by the Gestapo and would not be able to attend the start of school. "At the same time, Mr. Bauer requested the issuing of a testimonial in which the institute would provide a character reference for the pupil Bauer. The intended purpose of this was to achieve a more lenient treatment of the case by the Gestapo."

The staff body was not prepared to provide such a reference. The reaction was that: "People who have been arrested should no longer be permitted to enter the institute, because this could be publicly misunderstood and potentially reflect badly upon the teaching staff. In accordance with the statutes, the teaching body has the right to impose the most severe punishment on such pupils (application for exclusion from all public teaching institutes)." Things did not go quite this far, but Bauer was "permanently" expelled from Klosterneuburg. He was also refused a

⁴³ "Sudeten Germany has returned home." *Das Weinland* 10 (1938), p. 309.

⁴⁴ "In großer Zeit." *Das Weinland* 11 (1939), p. 261.

⁴⁵ Cf. Rill, Robert: *Geschichte des Augustiner-Chorherrenstiftes Klosterneuburg 1938–1945* (Wien-Salzburg 1985).

⁴⁶ Copy in the Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance, Vienna.

conduct reference “as long as this is not expressly requested by the Gestapo.” This resolution would scarcely have been arrived at if Zweigelt had been of a different view.⁴⁷

Celebrations in December 1940 to mark the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the institute were conducted in the same muted way as the year had begun.⁴⁸ In the meantime, Zweigelt was forming major plans in the background. As early as 1939, he had sent a memorandum to the Reich Ministry of Food and Agriculture proposing a programme for the expansion of Klosterneuburg.⁴⁹ A year later, he specified his dream of a “mission in the South East” and of the “great national task of keeping pace with Geisenheim” in the form of extensive conversion and extension plans. The files show that these plans were not accorded further consideration.⁵⁰ Nor was Zweigelt helped by the fact that he kept beating the drum for war. His editorial for the first issue of the “Weinland” to appear in 1941 once again found him pulling out all the stops.⁵¹ After the invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, Zweigelt was in his element twice over. He again paid homage to the Führer for an act of “home bringing”. The focus this time, however, was on South Styria, which had been “lost” to Yugoslavia in 1919. A decree issued by the Reich Ministry of Food and Agriculture (RMEL) on 12 July 1941 retrospectively appointed Zweigelt to the position of an executive civil servant with effect from 1 April and made him the “permanent head” of the Klosterneuburg Institute.⁵² This may have seemed something akin to recognition, but Zweigelt was still not a professor or a director. This promotion, which was in the gift of the “Führer”, ensued almost two years later on 27 May 1943.

In 1942, two events took place which in retrospective terms would mark the end point of the development of the institute under National Socialist rule. Firstly, in a tribute to Zweigelt following 30 years of service to Klosterneuburg, we read that he has succeeded in “overcoming resistance within a short space of time and in making the institute a stronghold of National

⁴⁷ Following his arrest in August, Bauer remained on remand with the Gestapo until 21 September 1940. He was committed to prison by the Vienna District Court on 22 September. The investigative proceedings instigated against him for preparation to commit treason came to an end when he was released from Anrath Men’s Prison (near Mönchengladbach) on 5 April 1943. Bauer spent a total of 138 weeks as a political prisoner. Scholz was executed in 1944.

⁴⁸ “Although we will be desisting from an official celebration in light of the enormity of developments and the unique historic events of the present ...” In: *Das Weinland* 12 (1940), p. 145.

⁴⁹ Federal Archive (BArch) R2/17094.

⁵⁰ BArch R2/18148.

⁵¹ *Das Weinland* 13 (1941), p. 1.

⁵² ÖMinLW personal file.

Socialism.”⁵³ Shortly afterwards, the institute’s cultivation area and test sites, which had previously only been around five hectares in size, were extended. The Gestapo had dissolved Klosterneuburg Monastery in June 1941. The institute, “which was known to have only small test sites at its disposal”, was subsequently awarded the Augustinian Monastery’s 40 hectares of vineyards and orchards⁵⁴ together with the cellars and winery.⁵⁵

The fact that Germany’s war fortunes began to turn during the winter of 1942/1943 could be one reason why Zweigelt’s editorials began to be more reticent at the start of 1943. The war, however, was also now affecting him personally. Marking the 60th birthday of Albert Stummer in the autumn of 1942, he mentioned that the latter’s son Friedl had died a “hero’s death” the year before. Zweigelt’s only son Rudolf, who had completed his medical studies in 1940⁵⁶ and moved to Langenlois following his marriage, was killed in East Prussia on 16 October 1944. By this time, the journal “Das Weinland” had long since ceased to exist. In February 1943, it had been amalgamated with the journal “Der deutsche Weinbau” in order to facilitate the “release of print workers to engage in measures related to total war”.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, Zweigelt continued to portray himself as a fervent National Socialist until 1945. In addresses given to mark the anniversary of the coup on 13 March 1938, the aggressions perpetrated by Nazi Germany against neighbouring peoples were undauntedly presented as a civilizational mission and now also as a struggle against “the Jew”, who controlled the plutocracies of the West. Zweigelt railed against Austria under its previous regime, calling it “rotten to the core, putrid and a homeland we hated because it was no longer a home” and also accentuated his own heroic role as an “illegal” during the “system period”. Speaking in 1943, he stated: “Those who are not with the Führer today, those who do not now know or wish to know what is at stake, those who do not deploy their entire strength in this gigantic struggle to

⁵³ Das Weinland 14 (1942), p. 41.

⁵⁴ Later correspondence makes mention of only 30 hectares.

⁵⁵ The Reich Governor in Vienna put in a good word at the RMEL for the testing and research institute in a communication dated 18 June 1941. Official consent from the Reich Ministry of Finance followed “only” one year later, dated 1 August 1942. (Budget plan inter alia in BArch R2/18148). Heinrich Konlechner was put in charge of administration, the intention being that he would be awarded special remuneration from Reich funds for this task. The money, however, was never paid. This led to a lively correspondence between various authorities in Austria and Berlin and within Berlin that was to last until 1944. (Cf. *ibid.*) An undated list of expenditure indicates that more than 60,000 reichsmarks were immediately invested in the vineyards and orchards of the monastery. (Cf. *ibid.*)

⁵⁶ Note Zweigelt/Kramer, 6 May 1940 (HBLA records).

⁵⁷ Schulze to Zweigelt (HBLA records).

determine the future of the continent [...] these people cease to be our comrades and have forfeited their lives.”⁵⁸

In 1945, Zweigelt was staying with the family of the wife of his fallen son in Langenlois when National Socialist rule in Austria collapsed and the Red Army invaded the country.⁵⁹ On 30 June, Zweigelt was arrested for “illegal activities” and committed to the labour camp in Klosterneuburg.

When first interrogated on 6 July 1945, the personal information he gave was intended to cast him in the light of a mere “follower”. Zweigelt stated that he had joined the NSDAP in April 1933 and had been a member “until the ban was introduced” in 1934. During the period in which the NSDAP was prohibited, he had remained a member of the “Schlaraffia”, to which he had belonged since 1920. He refused to accept that his imputed membership of the party between 1933 and 1938 was a conscious act on his part.⁶⁰ In his defence, Zweigelt further asserted that, “from a racial point of view”, he had adopted “an entirely neutral attitude” towards the Jews. As far as this point was concerned, he had been able to acquire a witness who was above suspicion. This person was the school teacher Heinrich Weil, a “first-degree Mischling”,⁶¹ who had taught German, history and geography as an “assistant teacher” since 1902 and had often published articles in the journals edited by Zweigelt. Weil had been removed from Klosterneuburg by the Ministry of Interior and Cultural Affairs in 1938. This had been against Zweigelt’s will, and he had used the institute’s funds to pay his “personal friend”⁶² the severance money due.⁶³ In addition to this and on the direction of Zweigelt, Weil had been able to obtain wine, fruit, vegetables and seed plants from the institute under the same conditions as all members of the teaching staff until 1945. Heinrich Weil further testified that Zweigelt had “repeatedly levelled severe criticism at the attacks of the National Socialists” and had “indeed strongly castigated the treatment meted out to the Jews”. In addition, he had “always defended

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ He was originally thought to have fled because he had left Klosterneuburg on 6 April and did not return until 27 May. He was, however, able to prove that he had travelled from Klosterneuburg to Langenlois on the orders of the Volkssturm militia and that military events had initially prevented his return (Volksgericht file).

⁶⁰ In December 1945, Zweigelt claimed that he had joined the NSDAP in April 1933, had paid membership subscriptions for two months and “then paid no further attention to the whole matter.” (Ibid).

⁶¹ Witness examination on 20 July 1945. Ibid.

⁶² Witness examination on 20 July 1945. Ibid.

⁶³ Statement by Dr. Heinrich Weil on 27 June 1945 (!). Ibid.

his Austrian homeland, including during the period of the Third Reich, and had incurred many difficulties with the authorities in Berlin.”⁶⁴

From what he termed his “concentration camp”, Zweigelt directed a petition dated 7 July to the Minister of Agriculture, who was not mentioned by name.⁶⁵ He set out a detailed description of the services he had rendered to Austrian viticulture in general and to Klosterneuburg in particular. He found himself unable to understand why he should now be “marked out as an illegal”. He had also forsworn National Socialism, which had brought an “idealist” such as him many disappointments.⁶⁶

Other companions of Zweigelt who were interviewed as witnesses painted a different picture. Julius Kloss went on record to say how scurrilously Zweigelt had behaved towards all the teaching staff and employees following the upheaval.⁶⁷ Prohaska mentioned the drawing up of a protest petition against Zweigelt. Zweigelt had deployed completely incompetent people in key positions at the institute and had displayed “selfish and ambitious” behaviour to him, Prohaska, and other teachers.⁶⁸ At the end of the first series of witness questioning, the wine chemist Maria Ulbrich testified that Zweigelt had revealed himself to be a person “who only tolerates other colleagues next to him if they are useful. As soon as he notices that someone may pre-empt or outflank him, they are deemed to be burdensome and are dropped immediately.”⁶⁹

On 11 September 1945, Zweigelt’s wife Friederike (“Fritzi”) appealed to the Head of the Vienna State Police for her husband’s release from custody. She stated that he was “an open and honest character who had fallen under the spell of National Socialism out of purely idealist motives and had never derived any benefit from this.”⁷⁰ The police in Klosterneuburg were not swayed. In their final report of 27 September 1945, they drew a picture of a former director who appeared as a “wicked character”. After the seizure of power, he had only risen to the top

⁶⁴ Affidavit by Dr. Heinrich Weil, Klosterneuburg, 4 July 1945 (Volksgericht file). Further examination on 22 February 1946.

⁶⁵ ÖMinLW personal file. This is likely to have been the ÖVP politician Rudolf Buchinger, who held the office of State Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry from 27 April to 26 September.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ First witness examination on 18 July 1945. Further examination on 22 February 1946.

⁶⁸ First witness examination on 18 July 1945. In a further hearing on 25 February 1946, Prohaska stated that he joined the NSDAP in the summer of 1938.

⁶⁹ First witness examination on 27 July 1945. Further examination on 18 February 1946 (Volksgericht file).

⁷⁰ Volksgericht file.

of the institute because of his “illegality and denunciation of teachers who would have been appointed as director”. He was prepared to pursue any means to achieve his ends. In a nutshell: “Fritz Zweigelt was an agitator and informer on a large scale, who shied away from nothing to advance himself professionally [...] It has not yet been possible to identify the extent to which Zweigelt damaged pupils at the institute.”⁷¹

On the basis of this report, Zweigelt was transferred from Klosterneuburg to the District Criminal Court Prison in Vienna on 25 October 1945. Two days later, the Vienna Public Prosecutor’s Office presented a report to the Senior Prosecutor. Zweigelt had maintained uninterrupted membership of the NSDAP and of the NSBO (National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation) since 1 May 1933 and 1936 respectively. An application was made that he should be remanded in custody because of suspicion of the crime of treason within the meaning of the Prohibition Act and suspicion of the offences of warmongering and denunciation in accordance with the provisions contained in the War Criminals Act.⁷²

Zweigelt was released from custody on 24 December 1945 by order of the Vienna Higher Regional Court.⁷³ One year and numerous further interrogations later, not much remained of the three charges. The Vienna Public Prosecutor’s Office had arrived at the conclusion that the “preliminary investigation” should be discontinued with regard to the offences covered by the War Criminals Act. “There is no specific evidence of denunciation,” read the submission, which was dated 11 September 1946. With regard to the diatribes regarding 13 March, the view was that these had “only been held in front of a small group of people”.⁷⁴ The Federal Ministry of Justice had no objections to this approach.⁷⁵

In the wake of a revision of the provisions relating to dealing with NS guilt pursuant to § 17 Paragraph 4 of the Prohibition Act as amended in 1947, Zweigelt was categorised as a “lesser offender” in February 1948.⁷⁶ The notice of 25 June 1946 dismissing him from the

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Federal Ministry of Justice, BMJ, Section IV, VI-d, 31.212-49 (ÖStA).

⁷³ Volksgericht file.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Federal Ministry of Justice, BMJ, Section IV, VI-d, 31.212-49 (ÖStA). Although all three offences were still included in the indictment of 14 October 1946, the latter two were modified to the effect that Zweigelt, in connection with his activity for the NSDAP, had brought about the removal of some teachers from Klosterneuburg “partially for political and partly for professional reasons”. As far as his speeches were concerned, he had variously “vilified Austria and the Austrian people.”

⁷⁶ ÖMinLW personal file.

public sector⁷⁷ was subsequently rescinded with effect from 18 February 1948. In July, Zweigelt appealed to Federal President Karl Renner (SPÖ) for suppression of the proceedings by means of a pardon.⁷⁸ The Viennese prosecution authorities had absolutely no interest in highlighting the obvious contradictions between the statements made by many witnesses and the testimony of Zweigelt. In the words of Vienna’s Chief Prosecutor Eugen Prüfer: “Dr. Z. was a convinced National Socialist, but he did not abuse his position in order to benefit himself.”⁷⁹ At the same time, it was possible to present the work Zweigelt had done up until 1938 as certainly brilliant and as being indispensable for the future of Austrian viticulture.⁸⁰ The lawyers came up with a remarkable excuse for the warmongering and exhortation of a National Socialist world view in the speeches relating to 13 March. These were considered to be “oratorical lapses”.⁸¹

On 10 July 1948, Federal President Karl Renner ordered that the criminal proceedings pending against Friedrich Zweigelt at the Volksgericht in Vienna should be halted.⁸² A verdict handed down on 4 August 1948 stated that action against Zweigelt in respect of suspicion of the crime of treason within the meaning of § 58 of the Austrian Criminal Code as amended by § 11 of the Prohibition Act had been “discontinued”. Notwithstanding this, he was not granted the right to claim compensation for the period of imprisonment from 30 June until 24 December 1945 “because the suspicion forming the basis of pursuit and arrest did not appear entirely dispelled.”⁸³

Proceedings had scarcely been discontinued when Zweigelt was retired with effect from 31 October 1948. From 1 November, he drew a pension which was calculated on the basis of

⁷⁷ ÖMinLW personal file.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Alongside two eulogistic articles about him, which Zweigelt had arranged to appear in “Das Weinland” in 1937 to mark his 25th anniversary of employment, the clemency appeal was also accompanied by a letter from the Government of the Federal State of Styria stating that it would be of crucial importance to fruit cultivation and viticulture in Austria for Zweigelt to be able to continue his work as an internationally recognised researcher (ÖMinLW personal file).

⁸¹ Ibid. Prüfer also introduced a further element in Zweigelt’s favour by stating that a “politically damaged” woman had made herself known and had maintained that she had been “saved” by Zweigelt.

⁸² However, the Volksgericht file does not end with this document. Six months after clemency was granted, Renner enquired whether Zweigelt had emigrated. He harboured the suspicion that Zweigelt had deceived him and had only sought suppression of the criminal proceedings pending in order to be able to leave the country.

⁸³ Ibid.

service of around 29 years, more precisely for the period from 1 March 1912 to 12 March 1938 plus two years and six months for the time between 1914 and 1918.⁸⁴

In 1950, 21 years after the festschrift edited by Zweigelt to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the institute in Klosterneuburg, a further publication appeared which was dedicated to the oldest oenological research centre in the German speaking countries.⁸⁵ The editor of this particular commemorative volume was Professor Emil Planckh, who had succeeded Zweigelt as Director in 1945.⁸⁶ Planckh provided a brief review of the time following the so-called Anschluss of Austria to Nazi Germany. “The year 1938 brought a sudden departure from their place of work for many loyal staff. The institute itself at least managed to survive the years until 1945 without suffering irreparable damage.”⁸⁷ It was as if a collective vow of silence had been taken. In the festschrift, no one devoted a single word to the time Klosterneuburg spent as a “stronghold of National Socialism”, let alone to men such as Zweigelt, Konlechner⁸⁸ and Kramer⁸⁹, who had then stood at the helm of the movement.

Zweigelt turned sixty in 1948. He found a new home, including politically, in the city of Graz. After having been a member of the NSDAP for many years, he now worked in “very close agreement with the ÖVP”. He did not suffer material need. His pension entitlements together with income as a “consultant” for the company Hans Tagger und Co. are likely to have been more than sufficient.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ ÖMinLW personal file.

⁸⁵ The occasion indicated in the main title of the work – “90 years of the Higher Federal Teaching and Research Institute for Viticulture, Fruit Production and Horticulture” – did not provide any indication of the controversial nature of the publication. This was revealed in the sub-title: “Report of the period 1945/50 – 5 years of reconstruction”.

⁸⁶ Cf. Festschrift und Almanac (Note 42), pp. 115 ff.

⁸⁷ 90 years (as Note 85).

⁸⁸ The Cellar Inspector of many years’ standing and later Professor of Viticulture and Vinification in Klosterneuburg, who in 1945 obtained a doctorate in agriculture from the School of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna by presenting a dissertation on vine cultivation, was managing a wine shop in Linz in 1950. Konlechner was retired on 31 July 1951, but returned to Klosterneuburg on 5 April 1954. All information on Konlechner is sourced from his ÖMinLW personal file.

⁸⁹ After fleeing Vienna, Kramer was captured in the American zone of occupation on 9 June 1945 and interned in Ludwigsburg or held in a camp until 18 September 1947. On 24 March 1948, he was declared to be a “lesser offender” by the denazification court in Heilbronn. (EL 902/11, case file Denazification Court 24 Heilbronn City. Württemberg State Archive Ludwigsburg EL 902/11).

⁹⁰ The “new edition” of the company’s “plant protection calendar” appeared until 1963. In bold type on the cover, this was stated to be “Written and edited by Prof. Dr. Fritz Zweigelt”.

There is no evidence as to whether Zweigelt ever set foot on the premises of the institute in Klosterneuburg again after 1945. It is just as impossible to surmise the nature of any personal contact with former or new members of the teaching staff. Beyond the seemingly close ties he enjoyed with the vine grower Lenz Moser, the extent to which Zweigelt was involved in continuing the endeavours which he had set in motion in 1921 as Head of Austrian Federal Vine Cultivation is also uncertain.⁹¹

Indeed, after 1935, traces of the vine cultivation stocks nurtured by Zweigelt were lost for some considerable time.⁹² After 1945, however, it emerged that some of these stocks produced by the former Federal Vine Cultivation Station were on a new trial plot of around 2,100 vines and had survived the war.⁹³ But what had become of the vines which had been planted in other places with a view to testing suitability to different soil and climate conditions? These locations included Langenlois (for the pure varieties the institute hoped to produce) and the area around Krems (for the direct producers)⁹⁴ and also Walkersdorf, Obersulz and Guntramsdorf.⁹⁵

We now reach the year 1958. In the first two issues of the “Österreichische Weinzeitung”, three articles appeared which were dedicated to Friedrich Zweigelt on the occasion of his 70th birthday. The first of these was from the pen of Albert Stummer, who had expressed the highest praise for his friend and colleague since as long ago as 1937.⁹⁶ The second rave review came from Franz Wobisch, who had once been Head of Selection at the Ministry of Agriculture and

⁹¹ Between 1929 and 1943, Lenz Moser was a regular contributor to “Das Weinland”, the journal edited by Zweigelt.

⁹² Remarks made by Heinrich Konlechner seem to suggest this. Konlechner stated that it was “regrettable” that the work could not be continued properly after the departure of his staff member and engineer Steingruber and indeed that “most material had been lost in the years following the economic depression and then during the war” (obituary).

⁹³ Wilhelm Bauer offered a summary of the status of the Klosterneuburg teaching institute’s own vineyards in a preliminary report for the wine year 1946 in: Österreichische Weinzeitung 1 (1946), p. 42.

⁹⁴ Zweigelt, Friedrich: Die Züchtung von Rebsorten in Österreich, in: Wein und Rebe 6 (1927), pp. 1–37, here p. 11.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

⁹⁶ “*Das Weinland*, established by Zweigelt, has maintained the same scientific and practical standards – a remarkable circumstance! The journal had for many years been the recognised mouthpiece for all aspiring experts in the field. It was thus inevitable that Zweigelt should be appointed Director of the Higher School of Viticulture and Fruit Production in Klosterneuburg. The new director had found an unprecedented way of connecting with research institutes at home and abroad. There was probably no expert in Germany, France, Italy, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia with whom I did not maintain personal contact and correspondence. Klosterneuburg was once again on everyone’s lips, and the scientific activity of the individual institutes thus received the desired resonance and breeding ground.” Quotation from: Österreichische Weinzeitung 13 (1958), Issue 1, p. 5.

had also assisted Zweigelt in cleansing Klosterneuburg of undesirable persons.⁹⁷ The third personal tribute was contributed by none other than the vine grower Lenz Moser. The headline read: “From 1960 – Zweigelt hybrids available”.⁹⁸ Before he came to his point, Lenz Moser extolled the praises of his teacher. “Anyone who has ever met Dr. Fritz Zweigelt or at least heard him speak is bound to have remembered it for their entire life. Doctor Zweigelt is one of those people who emanates a certain something, an ‘aura’. Only true personalities possess this.”⁹⁹ Moser described Zweigelt’s services to vine cultivation by saying that he was a scientific researcher who had “carried out far in excess of 1,000 hybrids between different European vines and between European and American vines.”¹⁰⁰ The most important of these varieties still existed today in Klosterneuburg, Langenlois and Rohrendorf. Two varieties were even being propagated in greater numbers. One was a cross between St. Laurent and Blaufränkisch, “which had been named the Zweigelt vine in honour of its grower.”¹⁰¹

By 1958, the naming process had reached a stage at which it could no longer be stopped. At the time, it was neither unusual nor improper to call a new vine variety or a new rootstock after its creator. The “role model” in this regard was the hybridisation of Riesling and Madeleine royal. This had taken place in 1882 and been named after the cultivator Hermann Müller (1850–1927) and his German-speaking canton of origin, Thurgau, whilst he was still alive.¹⁰² A rootstock designated in its abbreviated form as 5BB and often also referred to as Teleki 5BB had also

⁹⁷ At the point where it would have been appropriate to provide a chronology of the events before and after the annexing of Austria and of the effects of these on Klosterneuburg in 1938, Wobisch wrote: “In 1937, he delivered a lecture on vine cultivation at the Viticulture Conference in Heilbronn. In 1939, he became chairman of a section of the International Wine Growing Conference in Bad Kreuznach.” Three paragraphs later, we read: “Even the events of the post-war period, which caused him to plummet from the top into the abyss, were not able to bend or break such a force of life. Ultimately, these changes only had an external effect. He was more palpably struck by the fact that his son, who had a great future ahead of him as a doctor, did not return home from the war.” *Österreichische Weinzeitung* 13 (1958), Issue 2, p. 5.

⁹⁸ *Österreichische Weinzeitung* 13 (1958), Issue 2, p. 11. Cf. the article by Peter Moser in this book for more information on Lenz Moser.

⁹⁹ *Österreichische Weinzeitung* 13 (1958), Issue 2, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Cf. Deckers, Daniel: Eine neue Rebsorte. Aufstieg, Fall und Zukunft des Müller-Thurgau, in: Fine. *Das Weinmagazin* 2 (2013), pp. 76–81 (Wein und Zeit VIII).

caused furore far beyond the borders of Austria.¹⁰³ Similar controversy was to befall a rootstock in Germany developed by Carl Börner in Naumburg/Saale.¹⁰⁴

A similar drama had been played out in Germany in the late 1940s. The Alzey-based vine grower Georg Scheu, a member of the NSDAP since 1933,¹⁰⁵ developed a highly promising new cultivation. He entered this into the cultivation records as “Sämling 88” and in 1936 named it the “Dr. Wagner Rebe” in honour of the Peasant Leader of Hessen-Nassau, who was a staunch Nazi.¹⁰⁶ After the death of Scheu in 1948, the vine grower Hans Breider proposed that it should be renamed the “Scheurebe”.¹⁰⁷ This variety was thus “denazified”, and Scheu also received a memorial.

Moser wished to obtain the same honour for Zweigelt. As early as 1956, he was describing the new “Blaufränkisch x St. Laurent” hybrid¹⁰⁸ as an “interesting red grape variety for high-trained vines. But because the name of this variety is far too long, I have asked the grower if he would permit his new hybrid simply to be called the ‘Zweigelt grape’.”¹⁰⁹ In 1958, he announced that the “Blauer Zweigelt vine” and a Zweigelt hybrid of Green Veltliner and Welschriesling would immediately be propagated on a large scale and “would be available to vintners from 1960.”¹¹⁰ Both varieties enriched the sparse range available for high-trained vines “and will make the name of Dr. Zweigelt immortal.”¹¹¹ According to Moser, the new variety offered considerable advantages over the old red grape types. It ripened early like a Blauer Portugieser and offered the additional benefit of being resistant to decay. Another aspect in favour of the new variety was that it was impervious to mildew and produced a “very dark red

¹⁰³ Cf. inter alia. Das Weinland 3 (1931), p. 94.

¹⁰⁴ See inter alia Börner, Carl: 30 Jahre Deutsche Rebenzüchtung, Bremen 1943 (Schriften der Wittheit zu Bremen, Reihe G: Bremer Beiträge zur Naturwissenschaft, Volume 7, Issue 3).

¹⁰⁵ A portrayal of Scheu can be found in Deckers, Daniel: Scheu wie Scheurebe, in: Fine. Das Weinmagazin 2 (2016), pp. 136–140 (Wein und Zeit XIX).

¹⁰⁶ See Scheu, Georg: Mein Winzerbuch (Berlin 1936), p. 172 f. and Scheu, Georg, Was man von der Dr.-Wagner-Rebe wissen muss, in: Der Deutsche Weinbau 17 (1938), p. 628. Wagner acknowledged Scheu as being “absolutely reliable” politically, something which was never publicly attested of Friedrich Zweigelt.

¹⁰⁷ Regarding the significance of Breider for vine cultivation in post-war Germany, cf. Deckers, Daniel: Für die Ewigkeit bestimmt. Eine kurze Geschichte der Rebsorte Rieslaner, in: Fine. Das Weinmagazin 3 (2014), pp. 110-114 (Wein und Zeit XIX).

¹⁰⁸ The reference is probably to “St. Laurent x Blaufränkisch”.

¹⁰⁹ “This new hybrid came to attention in earlier years [...]. [...] I have 80 vines [...]. We need to start by creating a larger site at our own facilities. It will then take about five years before this new variety can be sold as a grafting.” Der Winzer 12, (1956), pp. 196–197. I would like to thank Counsellor Josef Weiß for providing this reference.

¹¹⁰ Österreichische Weinzeitung 13 (1958), Issue 2, p. 11.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

juice that was low in acid.”¹¹² The wine itself had “a very good Burgundy bouquet and is mild and velvety.” This was achieved despite very early lignification of the vine and a frost resistance which exceeded that of all other red grape varieties.¹¹³

As far as well can tell, Zweigelt himself made only one public utterance regarding the circumstance that his efforts as a vine grower had ultimately resulted in success. At the awards ceremony for the Karl Escherich Medal, he delivered an acceptance speech entitled “The high points of my life – work and pleasure”. He concluded his remarks on the topic of vine cultivation by saying: “Thousands of hybridisations have been carried out for the *cultivation of new varieties*. In my view, only a few of these have fulfilled expectations – such as the Blauer Zweigelt grape [...] The existence of the Zweigelt grape evokes mixed feelings in me. On the one hand, there is the hope that it will probably survive me. On the other hand, I hope that this wine will intoxicate people in the same way that I was intoxicated with joy at its successful cultivation.”¹¹⁴

If we read this statement in the light of a thought which Zweigelt captured in 1930 in an article of the cultivation of vine varieties, then his choice of words may not seem exaggerated. In order to justify the expense which he had been devoting to vine cultivation since 1921, he did not merely point out the enormous opportunities offered to quality wine growing by selective cultivation. He also offered the following explanation of hybridisation, a more elaborate and disproportionately more costly process. “The whole facility is focused on serving scientific research rather than yield. Even the discovery of only *one* valuable new hybrid pays off handsomely.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ The jury is out on whether Moser is the only person whom Zweigelt needs to thank for his “immortality”. Heinrich Konlechner set out a second trail after the death of Zweigelt. As Director of the HBLA in 1964, he conjectured that Zweigelt may have gained a “feeling of deep satisfaction” from the fact that “his vine cultivation work, which had been in great jeopardy, had been revitalised after the war by Professor Steingruber and his pupil Müllner and that the better prevailing conditions had led to a development which he had made every effort to achieve in the interests of Austrian viticulture, but in vain.” Konlechner, Heinrich: Prof. Dr. Fritz Zweigelt – sein Weg, in: Österreichische Weinzeitung 19 (1964), p. 121.

¹¹⁴ Zweigelt, Von den Höhepunkten (Note 7).

¹¹⁵ Zweigelt, Friedrich: Die Züchtung von Rebsorten in Österreich, in: Wein und Rebe 6 (1927), pp. 1–37, here p. 11.

However he may have looked back at his life, which came to an end on 18 September 1964, a few years after the death of his wife and when he was “physically inhibited” by a stroke,¹¹⁶ this particular hope of Friedrich Zweigelt came to fruition.

Epilogue: Just under a hundred years after its cultivation, the “Zweigelt” is the most widespread vine in Austria. It is grown across an area of some 6,400 hectares and is the most important red grape variety by some distance. It was included in the official index of quality wines in 1972 under the name of “Zweigeltrebe Blau”. In the same way as the Klosterneuburg cultivations Blauburger and Goldburger, it may also be referred to in Austria as “Rotburger”. In the list of vine varieties managed by the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), Rotburger, Zweigeltrebe and Zweigelt are designated as synonyms for the Blauer Zweigelt variety. The “Vitis International Variety Catalogue” (VIVC) does not recognise the designation Rotburger. In Germany, this vine variety is known as “Blauer Zweigelt”.

Dr. Daniel Deckers



Daniel Deckers received his doctorate from the Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen in Frankfurt. Since 1993 he is a member of the political editorial staff of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and since 2011 he is responsible for the department “Die Gegenwart”. Deckers is particularly well-acquainted with German viticulture in the NS-era; he teaches history of viticulture and the wine trade as an associate scientist at the Hochschule Geisenheim University.

E: d.deckers@faz.de

More on the background regarding the discussion surrounding the naming of the variety Zweigelt/Rotburger see [here](#).

¹¹⁶ Konlechner, Zweigelt – sein Weg (as Note 113).