

77th International Commemoration

Wolfgang Quatember

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you to the 77th International Commemoration of the Victims of the Ebensee Concentration Camp. I would especially like to welcome the relatives of the victims and the former prisoners, among them the President of the Comité International de Mauthausen, Guy Dockendorff. I also welcome the director of the "Mauthausen Memorial", Dr. Barbara Glück.

I welcome the representatives of the embassies, among them, and I am particularly pleased about their presence, a delegation from Ukraine.

I would also like to welcome all the political representatives of the EU, the provinces, districts and municipalities, and in particular our friends from the twin city of Prato.

I would like to thank all participants, first of all the music ensemble "Sonderschicht" under Hans-Peter Höller, the volunteer fire department and all others who contribute to the success of the commemoration.

For the first time, there are no survivors of the Ebensee concentration camp among us. I know that some are still alive and would like to be here. Their health no longer allows them to travel. But they are present in our thoughts, also the many friends from the ranks of former prisoners who are no longer alive: Drahomir Barta, Joseph Hammelmann, Max Garcia, Max Safir, Solomon Salat, Italo Tibaldi, Lubomir Cecevic, Roberto Castellani and many others. We miss them.

At the outset, let me just say a few sentences that I think are necessary: Today we honor all the victims who were murdered here by the Nazis. All of them, without distinction of birth or origin. Attentive observers will probably also have noticed the Russian and Belarusian flags in the background. The flags are present because we commemorate all victims of the then Soviet Union, without exception. We condemn the Russian war of aggression on the Ukrainian Republic, but honor the Russian victims who were murdered here as prisoners of war and forced laborers.

(Translated with DeepL)

Sabine Promberger (Bürgermeisterin Ebensee)

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the 77th time, we celebrate the liberation of the Ebensee concentration camp and the end of National Socialist terror. For the 77th time, we remember all the victims who were humiliated, tortured and murdered at this place. This is the first time that I, as mayor, have the privilege of welcoming you to this historic site in our community, and unfortunately it is also the first commemoration ceremony in Ebensee that we have to celebrate without any contemporary witnesses. As a representative of the many contemporary witnesses, we had the opportunity to meet in Ebensee, I remember Andrew Sternberg, survivor of the concentration camps Melk, Mauthausen and Ebensee, and his tireless efforts to prevent us from forgetting the incomparable cruelty of man in the Holocaust. I bow down before him and all contemporary witnesses - thank you.

In Ebensee, my predecessors, especially the mayors Rudolf Graf and Herwart Loidl, have confronted this forgetting and suppression with the Zeitgeschichte Museum & KZ-Gedenkstätte Ebensee, a groundbreaking project that gives the community of Ebensee, the region and its people the opportunity to actively participate in coming to terms with our history.

It is a history whose causes and events must not only be a reminder to us all, but above all a mandate for the here and now: The mission not only to learn from our history, but also to use it to make demands on ourselves every day and to ask: Am I showing civil courage? Am I showing solidarity? Am I asking the right questions? Do I recognize injustice? Am I raising my voice? Am I human? We often ask ourselves, "What can I do as an individual?" In a democracy, we have the opportunity to ask ourselves these questions, have the opportunity to work without fear of repression to become more courageous, more solidary and more critical, and thus make our society more resistant to totalitarian tendencies. Let us use our possibilities - every day!

Where the other way, the authoritarian, the fascist, goes, we see in some areas of the world, like in Turkey against the Kurds or in Syria, most impressively at the moment in Russia. With horror and speechlessness, the democracies of the world face a despot who ignores all conventions of human coexistence. A Russian ruler who uses bombs against the children and grandchildren of those Ukrainians who together in the Russian army liberated Europe from Nazi rule in 1945.

A ruler who speaks of "Jewish anti-Semites" after the Shoah. This Russian president has forgotten or never understood the lessons of WW2.

It was prisoners of many nations, among them Russians and Ukrainians, who were seen off to their homeland on May 16, 1945 at the roll call square of the Mauthausen concentration camp during the first liberation ceremony with the "Mauthausen Oath".

It states:

We will tread a common path, the path of the indivisible freedom of all the path of indivisible freedom of all peoples, the path of mutual respect, the path of cooperation in the great work of building a new world, just for all, free world".

May this oath be fulfilled! Thank you.

(Translated with DeepL)

Guy Dockendorf (Comité International de Mauthausen)

The members of the international committees
and national associations of remembrance of the camps of:

Auschwitz
Buchenwald-Dora,
Dachau,
Flossenbürg
Mauthausen,
Natzweiler-Struthof,
Neuengamme,
Ravensbrück
Sachsenhausen

have signed the following appeal:

Stop this war immediately!

As custodians of the memory of the victims of the Nazi extermination and concentration camps and of the values they defended - often to the death - the undersigned representatives of the National and International Committees of the Nazi Camps, faithful to the Oaths proclaimed at the Liberation and attached to founding historical realities, declare :

Among the Soviet survivors of the Nazi camps who, in the spring of 1945, left the places where they had faced death for years, the most numerous were often Russians and Ukrainians. They all shared the hope of becoming witnesses and actors of a new, liberated and peaceful world.

Russians and Ukrainians had been registered by the Nazis under the same category of prisoners, they had to face the same deprivations, humiliations and life-threatening situations. They could only rely on the solidarity between deportees to survive. All of them had had their share in the common struggle against the Nazi aggressor, as citizens of the Soviet Union.

New states have emerged, but the common history and the human bonds forged by history do not stop at national borders. None of those who suffered the war, none of those who carry the painful legacy, can bear the prospect of a return to tragic times. All of them are united today in considering, in the words of the Mauthausen Oath, *"this reconquered freedom as a common good of all peoples"*. As bearers of the memory of the victims of Nazism, the signatories of this appeal denounce the use of the words *denazification* and *genocide* to justify the attack on Ukraine. We are legitimate in pointing out the weight of tragedy that they cover. We cannot accept that these words should be so abused.

The Testament of the women of Ravensbrück (*Neubrandenburg Manifesto*), the Oaths and Manifestos of Buchenwald, Mauthausen - on the sites of the just-liberated camps - and then Ravensbrück, Dachau and Neuengamme, all call for peaceful coexistence between all peoples, in peace, democracy and the sovereignty of nations.

We condemn the war against Ukraine, which endangers the very existence of this country and peace in Europe. This military attack is a clear violation of international law. We are convinced that any political conflict can be solved at the negotiating table if both sides show reason and humanity.

Stop this war immediately!

(Translated with DeepL)

Vit Barta (Prag)

Ladies and gentlemen, dear visitors from near and far, I wish you a wonderful day.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers, namely Dr. Wolfgang Quatember, for inviting me to this celebration and for giving me the opportunity to speak on this special occasion. It is a great honor and obligation for me. When I first visited this memorable place with my parents as a twelve-year-old boy in the summer of 1968, I had no idea that I would return here many years later as a speaker.

My name is Vít Bárta, I am Czech and the son of Drahomír Bárta, a former prisoner of the German concentration camps, first in Theresienstadt, later in Mauthausen, Redl-Zipf and finally here in Ebensee. My father spent the most difficult years of his life in these picturesque places and, together with many other fellow prisoners, was subjected to trials that we can hardly imagine in the comfort of our lives today.

In my presentation, I will first discuss his personal story as I perceived it as a child of the postwar generation. Then I will try to place this story in a broader historical framework and finally draw lessons for today. I would like to take up a literary turn of phrase that my father used in the preface to the Czech edition of a book by the Russian Ilya Nazarov, his former cellmate, published in 1963 under the title "We Will Never Forget." The poetic phrase is "throwing a message in a bottle into the sea of time." Witnesses of horrific historical events usually try to pass on the message. They hope that, despite possible adversity and obstacles, they will place their testimony in the hands of future generations, who will be reached by a profound and indelible experience accompanied by the utmost urgency. They believe that the horrors they have experienced will be so chilling when passed on that they will hopefully not be repeated. But no one can be sure in advance whether these messages will ever find their intended audience, whether they will be intelligible to future readers, or whether they will be properly understood. When my father arrived in Ebensee with the first transport of prisoners in November 1943, he was barely 23 years old. Thanks to his high school education and his good knowledge of foreign languages, he managed to get a job as a camp clerk. This gave him a good overview of what was going on in the camp and enabled him to become involved in the slowly forming resistance movement of the prisoners, which was conducted under the strictest secrecy. He did this as a young and enthusiastic communist who, driven by the ideals of solidarity and international cooperation, sought out like-minded prisoners from other countries. He knew which new people were gradually arriving in the camp with the transports, and together with his closest fellow prisoners he tried to win them over to the common cause. At first, it was only a partial relief of the extremely difficult conditions in the camp, at best the saving of individual lives, if that was possible at all, thanks to small evasive maneuvers and evasions against the orders of the Gestapo. The closer the end of the war approached, however, the more the underground movement of prisoners became oriented toward finding ways to prevent the mass bloodshed and unbridled violence that could realistically be expected in moments of escalation. What at first might have seemed to be pure fiction turned out in the end to be a very useful, beneficial, and life-saving idea.

I do not want to go into detail about all that happened in the Ebensee camp until the liberation by the American army. Thanks to the long-standing and systematic efforts of the Museum of Contemporary History, to whom we are very grateful for preserving our historical memory, this has been comprehensively documented. I would rather like to address how the incarceration affected the later life of my father and both my parents. I should point out that my mother was imprisoned at Auschwitz, and that she and my father knew each other well by then. However, her memories of that extremely depressing place in Poland were so hurtful and depressing that she hid them from her family for most of her life and never spoke to us about them. She did not return to them until she was very old, when she recorded her horrible experiences on tape. Even then, she wanted to be alone with her memories, so she did it without our presence. My father, on the other hand, carried the memories of his imprisonment with him throughout his life, often telling us about them and returning to them on various occasions. His friends among the former fellow prisoners, mostly French, Russians, Yugoslavs and Germans, formed a separate chapter in his life. With many of them he maintained lifelong contacts. He wrote them long letters, followed their life stories with interest and visited them whenever possible.

What I remember most are times when my father met with friends close to him on occasions like today, often unexpectedly and unplanned. More than once I have seen men of advanced age, dazzled by a lifetime of experience, fall into each other's arms after not having seen each other for many years, unable for a long time to speak a coherent word, and the tears of emotion that rolled inexorably down their cheeks were eloquent testimony to the deep emotion of their minds.

In a well-known movie it is recommended that if you want to make sure that the bonds of friendship and love between people are still strong, you should go to the airport where people who are close to each other are greeted after a long period of separation. I can only add that I have never experienced such a moving and touching encounter as that of my father with his former concentration camp prisoners. The friendships made under the inhumane conditions of that time lasted a lifetime and were the most precious one could have or dream of. They were forged from stainless steel of the

highest quality. To be a bit more specific, during my life I have met names like Jean Laffitte, Henry Koch, Hrvoje Macanovic, Toma Petrovic, Ljubomir Zecevic, Milos Bajic, Ernst Lörcher, Kuno Wegner and Nikolai Baev. I met some of them personally, and pictures of Miloš Bajič or Nikolai Bajev still adorn my apartment. If there is anyone among you who knew these men personally or at least heard of them, I feel vicariously connected to you in this way.

My father kept a secret diary during his imprisonment. As far as I know, it was the only comprehensive document of its kind produced in the concentration camps on Austrian territory. Its existence was known to one or at most two people who helped my father hide it in a reasonably safe place. The small penciled notes found their place behind the fire extinguisher. I have no doubt that in a camp where total depravity reigned and where a person could be killed even in an instant, any diary entry that was discovered could have cost my father his life. This diary also took on a life of its own after the end of the war. Probably the most important role was played in the fall of 1972, when the trial of Anton Ganz took place in Memmingen. My father took part in the trial at that time as a key witness, and his diary served as important evidence from which he was quoted at length during the trial. One could say that the bottle containing the diary's message did eventually end up in the right hands, but this happened much later than any legal seeker would have wished, especially since Anton Ganz died of cancer less than a year later. When my parents returned from Memmingen, as a young man of sixteen, I had the uplifting feeling that my father's diary had played a role that went far beyond the boundaries of our family and perhaps even beyond those of all of Czechoslovakia at the time.

However, it was more than three decades before the diary was published in its complete form. This was done in German and with the significant cooperation of the historian Florian Freund, who had already quoted extensively from my father's diary in the 1980s in his detailed and extraordinarily meticulous scholarly studies of the concentration camps in Austria. Unfortunately, Florian Freund cannot be with us today, so I would like to send him a long-distance greeting to Vienna. My lasting debt to my father is the publication of his diary in the Czech language in which it was written. He himself never got around to it in his very active life. And when at the end of his life he began to work on the publication of the diary, unfortunately his long illnesses prevented him from doing so. His plan was to accompany the diary entries with drawings by Miloš Bajič, whom he had sincerely loved all his life.

When I think about the broader context of the Nazi concentration camps and the political developments in Europe after the war, there is one thing I still cannot understand. The people who rebelled against the unbridled oppression in the camp here in Ebensee at that time were undoubtedly courageous and honorable. Of course, they could only mind their own business and try to survive as best they could. But they chose a more difficult and often dangerous path, one of human solidarity and selflessness. In my father's rich archive, I found many interesting observations and notes after his death in 1998. One of them seems to me particularly eloquent and apt. He says that many people in the course of their lives developed habits of selflessness for the common cause or for others, but once they found themselves in the camp, in a life of selfish exploitation, they suddenly became completely defenseless. Suddenly they lacked the shell they had spent their entire lives scraping off with good intentions - fools that they were.

For me, the irony of fate remains that these people, who exuded humanity, personal courage and enthusiasm, often fought against Nazi totalitarianism under the Communist banner, but did not realize that they were helping to bring into the world another totalitarianism that was just as ruthless, just as intolerant, just as bloody, and had spread like a cancer throughout Eastern Europe. While the enemy in the form of fascist Germany was perfectly clear, easy to grasp and accurately described during the war, the communist threat at the end of the war was less obvious, operating in a deceptive disguise and often in great detours. Many of the people who so devotedly defended communism at the beginning thus had a long and undoubtedly painful road ahead of them to understand their historical error. For my father, the awakening from communist illusions began sometime in the 1950s. Certainly an incident he told me about many years later contributed to this. The scene was Sochi, where our family spent the summer of 1966. There my father met a close Russian cellmate whose name I unfortunately do not remember, but who is photographed in our family album. He took both my parents on a boat ride, and only when they were far enough from shore and he was sure no one else could hear him, did he begin to tell them about all the political atrocities that were the order of the day in the Soviet Union at the time and that the communist regime of the time wanted to keep secret from the world. My parents were shocked by his heartbreaking account, for they did not recognize the world for which they had ended up in concentration camps and for which they had fought so passionately in their youth.

I am convinced that the message our fathers put in the bottle speaks of the need to put values such as human freedom and truth to the test, even when their lives are threatened. They were willing to do this for us, and it is now up to us whether we are willing to do the same for our descendants. Russia's unjustified aggression against Ukraine has brought this question before us completely unexpectedly, but with all the urgency of history. The guilt of the attacking power is undeniable, and it is impossible to escape it. I try to imagine what my father's Russian cellmate would say about today's war in Ukraine if he were still alive, and how far we would have to go in a boat from the coast if he took me this time.

I cannot put into words the sadness I feel when I see innocent people dying needlessly every day, and how insignificant life on both sides of the fighting is in the eyes of those whose sanity has been clouded by boundless pride and imperial

hubris. This pain is all the more agonizing at the site of a former concentration camp, where the line between life and death was once as thin as the pencil lines in my father's diary, written in fear and terror, but also in the hope that one day he would see better days.

Dear listeners, I open before you an imaginary bottle and place my message inside that no one should fall prey to the insidious illusion that the unbridled violence perpetrated against others cannot affect him or her sooner or later. I throw this bottle into the sea of time in the hope that it will not break on the cliffs of fear, indifference, conciliatory forgetfulness or defeatism, and that it will arrive where it belongs. This is what the message brought to us by our fathers obliges us to do, from these very places in the midst of the beautiful mountains that my father admired all his life.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you a beautiful day.

(Translated with DeepL)

Amos Jeger (Beer Sheva Israel)

Dear Survivors, Families, Dr. Quatember, Mayor of Ebensee, Ladies and Gentlemen!

My name is Amos Jeger, I live in Israel.

Just before the holocaust becomes another forgotten, and sometimes denied, chapter in history, I wish to tell you, in brief, the biography of my father from between May 1944 and 6th of May 1945.

Ten years prior to my birth and seventy-seven years ago, my father, **Joseph Jeger**, was liberated here, in Ebensee, by the American Army.

He was almost 16 years old upon liberation, hospitalized in the camp's so-called hospital, suffering from exhaustion and starvation.

The next day he was examined by an American army doctor, who wrote in amazement:

Height: 1.80 m. Weight: 29 kg.

But my father was still alive.

His brother, **Zoltan Jeger**, my uncle whom I never knew, was with him in the camp's hospital. He died one day before the American soldiers arrived.

Zoltan was 20 years old and probably he is buried here behind where I stand now.

For many years my father refused to talk about his life during the holocaust. Just a few years before his death in 1992, he opened up a little and told me some of his doings in those dark days.

In May 1944, a month before his 15th birthday, he was taken, together with his family- his parents, **Jacob** and **Ida** two older sisters, **Elizabeth** and **Lili** and brother **Zoltan**, with most of Hungary's Jews, to Auschwitz.

Dr. Mengele was waiting on the train platform and with no hesitation sentenced my father's parents, my grandfather and grandmother, to death.

They were in their early fifties when sent to the gas chambers.

My aunts, Lili and Elizabeth, in their twenties, were sent to Germany to work in an Airplane factory. They survived, after much sufferings and hunger. Later they immigrated to Israel and raised new families.

My father, who was tall for his age and looked robust, was sent with his brother to the workers' barracks in Auschwitz camp.

Two months later, they were taken to Wolfsberg/subcamp of Groß Rosen in Silesia. There they were kept busy in digging tunnels aimed at concealing and protecting military plants from the Allied forces' bombings. My father's role was to lay the iron rails for the wagons evacuating the soil from the tunnel.

At the beginning of 1945, in a very cold winter, my father and his brother were taken in a long journey towards Austria. Most of journey he made on foot and partly in an open freight train wagon. During the journey, a part of his foot froze.

At the end of this rigorous journey, my father and uncle arrived at Ebensee camp where they were sent to work again, as you all know, in digging tunnels aimed at concealing military equipment. As before, my father's job was to lay the iron rails.

Conditions, as you know, were harsh. Being Jewish, his condition was even harsher than of the rest of the prisoners.

My father and uncle's physical condition deteriorated and they were able to work no more. They were taken to the camp's hospital where they had one bed, for both of them. My uncle, whose condition was worse, laid on the bed and my father-under the bed. The building's windows were shattered and the weather was freezing. The only medicine available was some skin ointment.

A moving story, my father had told me about the last days in the camp, was how the Czech Prisoners saved the Jewish prisoners from the Germans' plot to lead them into a tunnel and blow up its entrance. The Czech prisoners have heard about it and warned the Jews, who refused to go to the tunnels the next day, thus saving their lives. The Czech prisoners were a star of humanity in the darkness of hell.

My uncle died of exhaustion on May 5th, 1945. His remains are buried here, under this cursed soil. Had the Americans arrived one day later, my father would probably have been buried here along with his brother and I wouldn't be standing here to tell his story.

My father was treated by the American doctors after the liberation. When he regained some of his strength, he headed home. He was 16. He graduated from high school and became a student at the Academy of Music, where he studied piano and where he also met my mother.

I asked him once: How come you survived while so many people died around you? His answer was very simple: "Two factors influenced survival: Luck and energy balance.

Every day you weren't shot at or got ill, was a lucky day".

And what do you mean by "energy balance", I asked? "If the work you did consumed less energy than the calories in the food you ate- you survived.

As a matter of fact, the balance was very negative, reducing his weight to 29 kg. Thus he survived on luck alone.

In spite of what he went through, my father didn't hate the German people. "This is a new generation", he used to say, "and they are not to blame for their fathers' actions. But the Jews should see to it that there will never be another holocaust, for there is still much anti-Semitism in this world". He raised me to accept any person, regardless of origin and religion.

I am grateful to my father and mother that brought me, as a small child, to the state of Israel, thus enabling me to grow up in a free, democratic and independent country. A country that is the old homeland of the Jewish people and theirs only! On one hand, it's a homeland to every Jew in the world and on the other hand, gives freedom to the minorities living there. A country evolving to be strong, modern and developed.

Israel is a lonely Small Island of - democracy, freedom for all of its citizens, economic prosperity, high level of science art and culture and the most important, always seeking for peace. But unfortunately, that island is surrounded by an ocean of neighbors that some of them still want to destroy Israel and to exterminate all the Jews. The state that declares to the whole world its intention to destroy the State of Israel and all its Jewish inhabitants is Iran. Iran is not content with declarations and is working hard to obtain weapons of mass destruction to carry out its plan. Israel will do whatever it takes to defend itself.

No one cared what is happening to the Jews in Europe. The allied forces did not want to drop even a single bomb on the rail tracks to Auschwitz. No one, except Sweden, allowed Jewish refugees to enter their territory, including USA and Switzerland. The existence of a very strong state of Israel, as it is today, is the only guarantee for the Jews, never to have another holocaust. Had the state of Israel been in existence, and being strong as it is today, in the time of Nazism, the holocaust was avoided.

The new generations that my father raised, successfully, and happily in the historic homeland of the Jewish people, are his private victory over Hitler and his plan to exterminate all the Jews.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to ask something from all of you. This memorial ceremony is mostly important helping us to remember that the holocaust was not just another chapter in history, it helps to personalize it and connect it to human beings who went through it and most of them are lying here under the ground. So please encourage the second, third and younger generations of the survivors to keep on coming here year after year.

Never again!!!

Thank you very much.

Amos Jeger

(Translated with DeepL)

Gabriele Alberti (Vorsitzender der ANED Prato)

Ladies and gentlemen, representatives of institutions, mayors present - and in particular I greet you, Mayor of Ebensee Sabine Promberger -, President of ICM Guy Dockendorf, family members of concentration camp survivors and victims, citizens!

I would like to express my sincere thanks for the opportunity to speak here on the occasion of the 77th anniversary of the liberation of the Ebensee concentration camp.

I am the president of ANED, Prato chapter, the Italian association of former concentration camp inmates - we are here with a delegation from the city of Prato - and I would like to bring you the greetings of all Italian chapters of ANED, especially those of our president of the national association, Mr. Dario Venegoni.

The history of the so-called commemorative trips that ANED has always organized has roots that go back very far into the past. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, despite considerable economic and bureaucratic difficulties, the survivors and the family members of the victims very soon started to organize so-called "pilgrimages" to the former concentration camps, born from the need to commemorate the victims and to accompany the family members to the places where their relatives had perished.

As the years went by, the Prates survivors became more and more aware of the strong sympathy on the part of everyone that could make this experience possible! I am thinking of Roberto Castellani and Dorval Vannini, but also of the many former Italian and Tuscan concentration camp inmates who immediately understood that if the memory of Nazi crimes, with all that went with it, was to be kept alive, it was necessary to continue organizing these trips of remembrance. And that, even more than before, schools institutions and the citizens had to be involved, with the survivors and family members of the concentration camp victims acting as very special "guides".

In particular, it is the local groups of ANED that for very many years have used their energy and resources to accompany hundreds of students here to Ebensee and the day after to Mauthausen for the big international rally, when the liberation of Mauthausen concentration camp is celebrated, which took place on May 5, 1945.

Unfortunately, this has not been possible in the last two years due to the pandemic, but today we are here because we are more and more aware of the importance of these commemorative journeys and also of the fact that the meaning and function of the memory of those times is still relevant here in Europe - and it really should not be! Culture of remembrance as a means for the knowledge of historical contexts, but also as a call for personal commitment against any kind of intolerance, against racism; directed against all those who still believe today that they can change history and revise it for political calculation.

In a Europe in which racist tones are always being heard, in a world in which violent, brutal conflicts are always being fought, ANED has been able to keep alive the link between history, emotional empathy thanks to the reports of the survivors, and reference to one's own community, which had also characterized the actions of the concentration camp survivors. The association ANED still tries to realize all this through the memorial trips: History (documentation), reality of the places (visit to the former concentration camps) and reality of what was experienced (testimonies) as an educational and growth experience for the new generations.

This concern has two important motivations. In the first place, the Mauthausen camp and its subcamps are closely linked to the Italian deportation history, which is characterized mainly, also numerically, by the politically motivated deportation, even if there were thousands of Italian Jews who were murdered mainly in Auschwitz. Moreover, every year, also in Ebensee, where we are now, an international commemoration takes place with the participation of numerous delegations coming from many countries to reaffirm together the values of peace, solidarity and social justice on which our Europe is founded.

And today we are here also because we are in the greatest concern for the events in Ukraine, shocked by the many dead, men, women, children!

This war is so close to us and makes us aware, especially us Italians and Austrians who are all together here now, how important it is to remember and especially how important it is to realize how groundbreaking at that time was the political value of our twinning Prato-Ebensee and how meaningful it is still today after many years. It was the first or among the very first twinning signed on the basis of such a painful history. This was the wish of Prato and Ebensee at that time: to join together in the sign of peace!

And also today, hand in hand, we want to re-circulate this message of peace that our predecessors left us, as it allowed us to live in a peaceful Europe (with the exception of the painful war in Yugoslavia)! A time of peace in which, respecting our differences, there was peaceful coexistence among peoples based on law and respect.

So being here today has an even greater value! Let us please not undo the efforts of the concentration camp survivors from Prato together with the Ebensee community, which decided at that time to become a place of encounter and peace! Let us bring the example of our partnership as a message of peace to Europe, in the hope that diplomacy and common sense will prevail!

Tomorrow we will be in Mauthausen, where for decades the biggest anti-fascist rally in Europe takes place, organized by the International Committee Mauthausen as a result of a good coordination work and in which all those nations take part, who had victims in the concentration camp. In this committee also our association ANED has always made its important contribution.

Now, before concluding my speech, and by thanking you for allowing me to deliver it here in front of you, I would like to remind us all of the admonishing words that can be read in the last sentences of the so-called "Mauthausen Oath". Let us listen attentively:

"... In memory of the spilled blood of all peoples, in memory of the millions of brothers murdered by Nazi fascism, we vow that we will never leave this path. On the sure foundations of international fellowship, we want to erect the most beautiful monument we can to the fallen soldiers of freedom: THE WORLD OF FREE MAN.

We turn to the whole world with the call: help us in this work.

Long live international solidarity!

Long live freedom!"

Thank you very much!

(Translated with DeepL)