

74. International Commemoration

Markus Siller (mayor of Ebensee)

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

As mayor of the „Marktgemeinde Ebensee“ I would like to welcome all of you.

My special greetings are for:

the former prisoners of this camp, who are present, or their descendants,

the many representatives and delegations of all nationalities

the representatives of political and public life

the official speakers

I would like to say thank you to all of you for being present today. Because keeping alive the memory of the crimes of the national socialists, who killed more than eight thousand (8000) people in this concentration camp, it is very important and meaningful for our future.

Because only people who know, how the Nazis of that time acted and where their ideology led to, can realize how similar the actions of today's fascists are.

Only people who know, how the Nazis could come to power, know, how important it is to stand up for an independent justice, how important press freedom and freedom of speech are.

Everyone who has knowledge about human history, knows, that international cooperation is necessary to solve the problems of the world. Only permanent peace can guarantee a good future for our children.

The fascists of today try to manipulate us. With "alternative" facts, with targeted distraction. With permanent propaganda it is attempted to serve our lower instincts, to make us afraid. Afraid of "evil", afraid of the "others"!

Our mind shall be blinded, objective and differentiated discussions of possible solutions of the problems of today shall be prevented. By intimidating critical journalists and media workers it is attempted to stop inconvenient questions.

Nationalists as well as fascists are selfish and power hungry. Since several years we face the bad reality, that especially right-wing populist parties and autocratic presidents use propaganda systematically.

The more important are people like you, who warn the public about these demagogues and who defend our democracy, our values.

Freedom, equality, justice and solidarity.

Thank you for your attention.

Thank you very much for participating our liberation ceremony.

Friendship, Schalom.

(translation: Stefan Köglbauer)

Max Safir (survivor, Stockholm)

I am very thankful to all of you for keeping alive the memory of the unbelievable terrible things that happened on this place more than 70 years ago.

For the sake of everyone who did not survive, and for us who miraculously for some reasons survived and still continue to live with the memories.

As for me I was in the "Krankenrevier" by the time of the liberation. I had given up and I did not want to live. I weighed 24 kg. But thanks to the US Army I survived, and I am now 93 years old.

I met Bob Persinger for the first time in Ebensee in 2005 for the 60 years Commemoration of the liberation of KZ Ebensee.

After that he is my hero. We kept in contact and Bob and his wife Arlene later visited Sweden, and together we made a tour to many places in Sweden telling about our experiences. It was unforgettable.

I was very sorry to hear that Bob passed away last year.

In 29 January I visited the Royal guards in Stockholm. I told my story and I told about Bob Persinger and the liberation.

To honour Bob they played the US Taptö for Veterans. That was a solemn and great moment.

Finally, I want to end with Bob's words: Never Again!

Unfortunately, I could not be there with you this year due to health reason.

But miracles happen so maybe we will meet next year in Ebensee."

Guy Dockendorf (Comité International de Mauthausen)

(1) Léif gefale Komerode vu Mauthausen, [this is Luxembourgish and need not be translated, it will be explained in the following lines]

Wéi all Joer zanter dem Krich komme mir heihinn op Mauthausen, Ebensee, Gusen, Melk an eng sëllech aner KZer a Niewelager. Mir, déi mer d'Chance haten kënnen heem ze kommen, hunn lech dat hei versprach: «Sou laang mer wibbelen, mussen mer Zeechnes ginn vun deem wat hei geschitt ass»

These words my father used to address to his dead comrades murdered by the Nazis, since the end of WWII, on places like this here in Ebensee. He remembered the promise the survivors had given to their comrades: as long as we are able move, we will have to bear witness of what has happened here!

My father, Metty Dockendorf, KLM number 64551, was born in 1918. In October 1943 he was arrested by the Gestapo as one of the founding leaders of the Catholic boy-scouts who had founded one of the first resistance movements against the Nazis in Luxembourg, as early as August 1940. He was first imprisoned in the Hinzert concentration camp, then he was transferred first to Mauthausen, then to Melk and eventually to Ebensee, where he was liberated on May 6th, 1945 by the American forces. He was elected here at Ebensee into the International Mauthausen Committee.

Since the end of the war and until his death in 1987, he had been organizing for his comrades, their families and friends journeys of remembrance to Mauthausen and its subcamps. Since 1989 he had initiated similar journeys for the younger generations.

(2) The Comité International de Mauthausen, in short «CIM» is the umbrella organization of actually 22 member states representing the associations of former concentration camp prisoners.

It is interesting to know, that the CIM had already been founded during war-time, during the Winter 1944-45 when in Mauthausen, Melk, Gusen and Ebensee illegal and life-threatening but well structured resistance came to life. The prisoners had understood that resistance and solidarity were the only means against the SS and the criminal functionary prisoners (the so-called green triangles). They had learnt that this could only work if there was an international solidarity built on a common base which would overcome ethnic and ideological differences.

The International Mauthausen Committee tried to organize systematic help and well structured resistance across national boundaries. The first bigger and successful actions were undertaken by the CIM immediately before and after the liberation: even if CIM could not prevent the mass gassing of all of the so-called physically weak prisoners in April 1945, it succeeded nevertheless in repatriating a majority of them to the Sanitätslager (medical service camp) and thus saving their lives.

You would also find similar resistance structures in Melk, Gusen and Ebensee: outstanding prisoner personalities in Melk, great leaders, with their minds set on international solidarity were able to improve the living and working conditions of many prisoners.

Thus the spirit of internationality grew in Ebensee under the leadership of Jean Laffitte (France), Hrvoje Macanović (Yugoslavia) and Drahomír Bárta (Czechoslovakia). They formed a secret resistance organization with the mission to liberate the Ebensee concentration camp. They were very instrumental in the NO! which the prisoners opposed to Lagerführer Ganz who had proposed to bring them «for their protection» to the previously mined galleries.

(3) Let's come back to present times! Commemoration ceremonies like this one here only make sense under the condition that we, the 2nd, the 3rd and soon the 4th generation take our guidance from the men who have been suffering here, from their convictions and their values which we have to transpose into the lives and societies of today. The international solidarity which has been the key issue of the famous Mauthausen Oath of May 16, 1945 must continue to be our guiding framework. This oath is for us, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations, our commitment.

(4) Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

We are aghast to learn that more than 70 years after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the principles of human dignity and equality are being questioned! We are horrified when we hear the Minister of the Interior proclaim three months ago: «Das Recht hat der Politik zu folgen und nicht die Politik dem Recht.» meaning that politics are above the Law.

We have to raise our voices, again and again, and speak up: YES, the message of the former Mauthausen prisoners is still valid and it's the only way for mankind to live in peace! What does this entail? It simply means, that we have to fight against our own forgetfulness and ask ourselves: is Europe forgetting its own past? Some time ago CIM publicly declared this:

This Europe, which is barring the way to thousands of people, seems to have forgotten its own past. Its current richness stems also from the exploitation of mineral and human resources from other continents. Visibly, Europe has set aside the lessons from the terrible times of the twentieth century. Many Europeans, in both Eastern and Western Europe, have been refugees themselves during that century.

Europe appears to be turning a blind eye to the dangers posed by the mounting appeal of the extreme right and by neo-nazi groups. Instead of building bridges, Europe is erecting walls! The principles of humanism and international laws request that Europe and the world community help refugees, instead of losing themselves in petty disputes.

We feel sorrow, helplessness and horror and remember a time when Jews, "Gypsies" and political refugees and so called "asocial people" were pushed around the borders of the so-called democratic states, in a sea of indifference and neglect.

(5) Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

We strongly oppose slogans littered with xenophobia, racism and intolerance used by the extreme-right. We are extremely worried by the hate speeches of politicians who question international treaties and call for crusades, thus forcing many people to flee and accept degrading living conditions. We condemn all political decisions which continue to reduce the social rights of the weakest members of our societies.

We feel humility and respect with all the victims, we thank all those who keep remembrance alive and who raise our awareness so that we undertake every possible effort to avoid similar tragedies.

(6) Thank God, there are rays of hope: In January 2018, the International Mauthausen Committee and the Mauthausen Komitee Österreich had written an open letter to the Federal President and to the Federal Chancellor.

The answer we got from the Federal President, Alexander Van der Bellen touched us greatly. We do hope that the whole Republic of Austria is still backing his statement dated January 11, 2018:

In my previous discussions with the actual Government, but also in my public addresses I have always emphasized that out of respect for our common history we have to assume responsibility for our national history, its luminous AND its darkest pages.

I have also pointed out that we must carefully choose the words we use. Words and wording are not innocent. They educate our conscience and later, real life.

We need to respect the rights of minorities, we need to respect dissidents and we have to help those people who need our help most of all.

This will be the ultimate test as to what is the true worth of our values.

[End of quote]

Thank you for listening!

(translation: Guy Dockendorf)

Alessio Ducci (AnedToscana)

Dear ladies and gentlemen, representatives of the institutions, dear friends of Ebensee!

At first I would like to say thank you for the invitation on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the liberation of the KZ Ebensee. I am the president of the ANED Toscana and I deliver to you greetings from all Italian local groups of our society, a special thought goes for the local group of Prato in memory of Roberto Castellani.

My father Alberto Ducci, prisoner number 57101, was arrested in the frame of the general strike in March 1944, his transport went from Florence main station to Mauthausen, where the deportation arrived after three days of unbearable journey on the 11th of March. After 15 days of quarantine he was transferred to Ebensee. The first time was very hard for him: in the barracks the KZ prisoners of other nationalities were housed: They came from France, Spain, Albania, Yugoslavia, who were often arrested by Italian fascists. Therefore they said to my father several times: "You Italians, everything Mussolini!" On the other side the SS men, who hated the Italians especially because of the Italian armistice with the allies on September 8th, 1943.

At the beginning my father was used for cutting down firs, which were necessary for building the wooden barracks, but then he was put in a working commando, which had to work in the KZ-tunnels.

My father was born on May 16th, 1927, and here in Ebensee he met a fellow prisoner from Turin, who many of you perhaps got to know, Italo Tibaldi, who was born exactly the same day like my father. In the camp they both were called "the little twins" for that reason. Together with other survivors he was liberated on May 6th, 1945, he weighed only 27 kg, he felt very bad, because as a consequence of a brutal kick his shin was broken and he, like many others too, got a little bit of pleurisy as a consequence of the exhausting work in the tunnels.

After about one month, which he still had to spend in the camp that in the meantime was run by the Red Cross, he could start his journey home to Italy after having reached 37 kg body weight.

His reintegration in the society was very difficult, because he was plagued by feelings of guilt towards his dead fellow sufferers. That was the strong need, having to testify, but he was not driven to this by feelings of hatred and revenge, but by the wish to do honor to the victims and there was the aim, that nobody should suffer from such atrocities any more, that were done to them by these people at this places.

Already since the 1960s ANED organizes memories travel to Ebensee, at the beginning it were only few busses mainly with KZ survivors and family members of the victims; since the 1970s students and teachers come increasingly, this kind of pilgrimage, as we call it, has changed a lot, fewer and fewer survivors come, because most of them died in the meantime, now it is especially family members in second or third generation.

Together with my mother I have often accompanied my father on these journeys and I have never heard a single word of hatred or resentments from him, his only concern was being able to testify. For the last time he was in Ebensee in May 1996 and it became a horrible experience for us: He was already physically struck, but against the opinion of his family and the doctors he really wanted to be there. Unfortunately he died only two months later.

Since my father has left us, I have decided to continue his engagement for ANED, what is becoming more and more difficult since the demise of the last witnesses. Every year we accompany hundreds of students on our "pilgrimage" and visit the camps of Dachau, Mauthausen, Gusen, Ebensee, Hartheim and the Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste. It is five days, during which we have the opportunity to deepen the topic and the various aspects of the deportations. It is also an important opportunity to think about what makes these memories travels significant for current situations. Every day I think about if what I do, what we do, is sufficient, so that the younger generations become aware of what horrible things happened at these places, so that nobody will be forced to suffer from such things any more.

Today I look around and in face of the pain, which can still be felt at this place, and especially because of the presence of the last witnesses, I see wet eyes and much emotion in all of our faces here and there. Now I would like to turn to all of you with a short quote from the poem "It is forbidden" by Pablo Neruda:

This one: "It is forbidden to cry without learning!"

I would like us all to remember these words in several weeks.

Our society, our foundations and many historians are still trying very hard to reconstruct the biographies of the KZ victims: their names, their faces, their lives.

In several years for the same reason we will have the need to reconstruct the fates and identities of the thousands of people, who drown in the Mediterranean Sea. Most of them die during these journeys across the sea, which they went on not only out of hope for a better life, but also for saving their lives from war and atrocities! Children, women and men are devoured by the waves of the Mediterranean Sea and we read such messages quickly on our smartphones, we turn away and resume our everyday life. In total indifference.

I also turn to the present politicians: I ask you, do not focus your election campaign on making the people afraid! Let's close our ports! Let's build walls! Everyone who uses these words to gain consensus, puts on a medal, each of these medals is a sunken boat!

I also ask myself, what those people, who sacrificed their lives for our freedom, would say, if they saw, how an Italian minister of state lets himself be photographed with a machine gun on the arm and demands undauntedly: The Italians first!

This is really sad, ladies and gentlemen!

Today at this place, that is sacred for many of us, I demand, that it is clear to all present people: The people first! Do not be indifferent, have the power to outrage and to be on the right side! Be the partisans of justice!

I turn to all of you, I want to look in your eyes, I ask you to keep in mind:

“It is forbidden to cry without learning!”

(translation: Stefan Köglbauer)

Daniel Simon (Amicale de Mauthausen)

Never a number! Always a man!

The topic of the commemoration ceremony 2019 embraces on the one hand the most significant memory of the prisoners of the camps, with whom they witnessed their circumstances as prisoners for their entire life, and on the other hand the topic embraces certainly the failure of the SS at the same time.

Obviously we stick to one of the clearest camp laws: deindividualize, dehumanize.

The survivors of the camps never got rid of the matriculation number that was assigned to them after their arrival, this shameful mark – even if it was not, like in Auschwitz, tattooed on the arm. It is often the first thing they talked about in relation to their fate. They often did it even to the extent, that at the publication of the report of their imprisonment they chose this title for the front page of the book, sometimes even without entering their name. I can be witness for the people I came in contact with, who were arrested here in Ebensee for a whole year or the eighteen (18) months of the existence of the camp. I myself keep their numbers in mind: Here at that moment I let drain the shadows of some Frenchmen of Ebensee, 25519 (Laffitte), 25531 (Marchand), 26857 (Fort), 34534 (Gouffault), and, to continue with the calendar of the camp arrivals, 28542 (my father), and even the one, who follows immediately, 28543 (Sinoir). The logic of the arrivals of the convoys and of the alphabet are an amenity of the historian and for us, they left by the bureaucracy of the SS... If it had a destructive function, the number carries significant clues.

But this is not the decisive factor. We have to understand the burden of this matriculation number, which only existed in German language – for those people, who got rid of everything, even of their belonging to humanity. But almost all (all the people I have just mentioned) did not understand one single word German. But it was their immediate and absolute duty to keep in mind this number in German to react immediately to a number calling under penalty of stick strokes or to shout out the number in German, at the slightest request of a guard or a kapo...

For their entire life they have been burdened by this reflex memory, but especially by this symbol of final alienation, until the announced crematorium, in which their ashes were mixed, quite anonymously.

Apart from Auschwitz, all prisoners of the camps of the SS wore their matriculation numbers punched on a small metal plate, which was fastened by an iron wire on the wrist, as well as on the clothes, which the triangle was attached to.

The SS was fanatical about codifying its victims, this despicable mass, continuously the SS made classifications and categorizations to arrange and to create a hierarchy. This matriculation number, which was undoubtedly a management tool, was primarily something separating: Look what you are, a piece, not a human being! The SS and you, you are not from the same world: That one, who dares to look up to someone from the SS, is punished brutally; if an SS-man has to punch, he carefully puts on a pair of gloves at first not to get dirty. Nothing is allowed to make one assume the lowest homology between the masters and their slaves. What is unforgettable is humiliation.

Yet, we have said enough, that camp prisoners were not more than numbers. They had this opinion, what made their own decline visible for them. Nevertheless, basically each corner was taken a photo of – strange paradox, for pieces, which were all destined for the crematorium. And the dejected prisoners “due to attempted escape” also were. At the entrance the survivors, with infinite, peculiar facial expressions would deliver a wonderful but even mad material to the Nazi-experts of race, who are manic about categories, about hierarchy and chemistry of life. The enormous bureaucratic apparatus sends in several examples the name lists of the prisoners, which were created at arrival and at delays, and the detailed list of the dead ones, which contains even wrong indications, sometimes intentionally.

The matriculation number is poor in information. Certainly there were different indications, some with severe consequences: The Jewish star and triangles in various colors, the letter of the nationality. In addition there are characteristic identities (shave, striped clothes), even procedure from the military model (counting in the row, step in time, hats on). Even more devastating: sleeping like the sardines, nakedness, the health precautions and the health procedures. The system is a gigantic codifying machine to dominate the enormous international melting pot, which was characteristic for concentration society.

But the man withstands, the man exists, even in the spirit of the SS, because all these codes aim at the best use of each prisoner, what the maximum of specifications must be collected for. As rubbed out as they are the individual identity as well as the belonging to humanity cannot be destroyed.

Do the prisoners among themselves manage to keep a human contact, which was not part of the system? In a limited frame, but it was essential. I mention an anecdote, which my father told me. It does not concern Ebensee, but Redl-Zipf, where he had been arrested in winter 43-44, before he was put here. With the unknown he shared the bedstead with he had no exchange for several weeks, after the dulling of the construction site. So one night the other one said: “Merde! [Shit!]” My father’s reaction: “Tiens, tu es Français! [So what, you are a Frenchman!]”

The people withstand, even the things, which are beyond everything you can imagine. I quote the French playwright JC Grumberg, born in 1939, son of a Jewish deportee, who died in Auschwitz:

“In all inhuman situations people continue to live, and the smallest spark can be a new beginning.”

And I complete this execution with Robert Antelme, deportee in Buchenwald und Dora, who in 1947 with the title “The Humanity” published one of the most remarkable French reports about the experiences in the camps:

“The SS, which unhinges us, cannot make us unhinge ourselves. [...] The SS regards us as reduced to an undifferentiated mass [...], which we represent an undeniable appearance of. The man of the concentration camps is not the disposal of our differences. On the contrary, he is the true realization of them.”

(translation: Stefan Köglbauer)

Marlene Streeruwitz (writer)

In Austria, on July 21st of last year, the Freedom Party minister of transport announced by means of the daily Kronenzeitung that as of 2019 the driving test could no longer be taken in Turkish. In the Kronenzeitung. Behind the photograph of the transport minister, a woman wearing a hijab can be seen at the wheel of an automobile. The transport minister has a severe look on his face. The woman a smile. In the words of the Freedom Party transport minister, “The option of taking the driving test in Turkish, which has been available so far, discriminates against other ethnic minorities, who would also have liked to have the driving test translated into Chinese, Arabic or Albanian.” The readers of the Kronenzeitung are apparently thrilled that THOSE PEOPLE will all now have to learn German. It says so in the article, and it is confirmed in the postings. And the enthusiasm we see here is being justified on idealistic grounds. There can be no possible democratic reading of the transport minister’s statement. The Freedom Party transport minister is constructing ad hoc a Turkish driving-test privilege. Such a privilege never existed. It was a self-evident administrative procedure. It simply made good sense for each person taking the driving test to do so in the language

that he or she understood best. It was a reminder that there was a time in Austria when people thought more internationally. In Germany, the driving test can be taken in 12 different languages. Such linguistic diversity ultimately has a significant positive effect for everyone when it comes to road safety. The right-of-way rules are the same in all languages. Driver's education has nothing to do with linguistic integration. In order for the changes to the road traffic regulations for the year 2019 to be taken into account, it would have been a matter of translating 22 questions and adding them to the 596 questions that already exist in Turkish. Prohibiting the driving test in Turkish is an arbitrary act on the part of the Freedom Party transport minister.

The smiling Muslim woman in the photograph makes it perfectly clear: it is all about Islamophobia. Xenophobia. Anti-Semitism. Already some years ago the Austrian Freedom Party was putting up posters with the slogan "Daham statt Islam!" (in other words, literally, "Our Home instead of Islam!"). At present, in Vienna's municipal elections, the Freedom Party is peddling the slogan, "Mehrheit für unser Wiener Blut - Zu viel Fremdes tut niemandem gut," which translates as, "A majority for our Viennese blood – too much foreignness does no one any good." And all those who get excited. They know, they need no further proof: Turkish has got to make way for German.

German, the speaking of German – a feature included in the 1882 Linz Program of Schönerer's Pan-German Party, at first seen as a differentiating factor opposing German to the Slavic languages. That was back then, in the so-called Cisleithanian crown lands. In Paragraph II, the Linz Program demanded that "all internal official business be carried out and all public books and records be kept exclusively in the German language." The speaking of German. It was supposed to be proof of the "German character". The German character. In an 1885 addendum to the Linz Program, Schönerer demanded that all Jewish influence be eradicated from all spheres of public life. The German character of Cisleithania was conceived in anti-Semitic terms.

In the Habsburg Monarchy, this German character, along with racial anti-Semitism, was adopted by all bourgeois political parties. Anti-Semitism was an important campaign tool at all stages of the evolution of voting rights. In 1888, German Nationalists and Christian Socialists banded together to form the so-called United Christians. In 1893, Karl Lueger founded the Christian Social Party, which constantly made political points using anti-Semitic and anti-liberal rhetoric. It was anti-Semitism that was responsible for the Christian Socialists' success in the first general election for men in Cisleithania in 1907. In Vienna, Lueger had long since managed to prevail thanks to anti-Semitism. German. The speaking of German. What it implied was German descent, which urgently had to be placed above all other nationalities of the Monarchy. Quite consistent with this German-Nationalist logic is the fact that a law has just been adopted which allows the Freedom Party minister of social affairs to deduct 300 Euros from welfare benefits in cases where knowledge of German is deemed insufficient.

As for the Freedom Party minister of transport. With his administrative measure prohibiting Turkish, he is harking back to the Linz Program. The entire history of anti-Semitism also shimmers through the surface of this injunction to speak German dictated by the Freedom Party's German-Nationalist ideology. And then the party's program handbook demanding German-language autochthony. Once again, three generations have to be born in Austria. Once again, the number of grandparents determines whether a person is or is not considered autochthonous. At the moment, consideration is being given to the question of linking this ancestry to access to social services.

When we see Elfriede Jelinek being called a "Jew" in Identitarian blogs, we cannot help but be reminded of the Nürnberg Laws of 15 September 1935 and of the Marital Health Law of 18 October 1935, in the version for Austria contained in the decree entitled "First Decree Issued by the Führer and Reichskanzler Relative to the Introduction of the Laws of the German Reich in Austria" dated 15 March 1938. As before, the term "Jew" continues to be understood as signifying exclusion from the state. The use of the term reiterates the notion of loss of all rights and protection from the state. When, in 2010, Elisabeth Leopold, standing in front of the painting "Die Wally" in a museum in Lower Manhattan, burst out, "One must be tolerant towards the Jews," she managed, in her turn, to achieve this exclusion once again. Elisabeth Leopold cried at the time. Nevertheless, she managed to deprive those people who had been Austrian citizens, once again, of their citizenship and to apply the Nürnberg Laws. And at the Akademisches Gymnasium in Vienna, on a commemorative plaque, one reads: "In remembrance of all the pupils and teachers who had to leave this school in 1938 because they were Jews."

In Austria, people talk about the Holocaust as if they were talking about a natural disaster. But if what was actually done in the Shoah avoids being admitted. If the idealist fictions of racisms, anti-Semiteisms and sexism and the ways in which they operated in the past continue to be treated as idealist fictions. There can be no democracy if we continue to view the past through an idealist haze. And that is what it is all about. It is all about memory. Historical memory. Personal memory. The complex fabric of memory. That is the stage on which the present evolves. Every present. And it is the real locus of life. It will prove to have been the real locus of life. At every moment. How one's own life fit into the greater picture. Collectively. And individually. That is what the battle is all about. That is the stuff of politics.

But memory exists only in what a person perceives. What each person perceives. No theorem of idealistically conceived identities can change that. Nor does any such theorem seek to change that. After all, what is inflicted is meant to affect

the concrete person. When right-wing extremists in Rome trample food intended for Roma people and shout, “Dovresti morire di fame!” they mean they want individual persons to starve. These persons are expected individually to suffer and die, while the perpetrators see themselves as being kept safe by an idealistic code of Identitarian belonging. And kept in memory, in the constructed collectiveness of the memory of völkisch supremacies, which at the same time represents a blueprint for the future. This constructed memory already is the future. The present thus becomes a period of transition. It is time that can be deleted. A transition. The remembered past is seen as a promised future. Between the two, everything ought to be possible in order for this fusing of time to be accomplished. What is more, the time of transition is not a time but a means. A means can be criticized, but it is not memory. The time in between. In paradise, certainly no one can remember the purgatorial fire. The time in between never existed. Extinguished.

The fascist man in Austria. (In fascism, the masculine term always includes the woman as well.) He is the product of centuries of reactionary politics. From 1811 until 1975, the Napoleonic Code assigned the responsibility of ruling over the family to the ruled male subject of the monarch or state. Beginning with the early Enlightenment, the subject of the monarch was expected to make a public version of himself available to serve the state either as a civil servant or in a military function. As paterfamilias, he had command over his wife and children and over his household employees. As an offset to this, in Austria marriage law was the affair of the Catholic Church. From 1885 on, completely so. Therefore, the paterfamilias could not get divorced. In the Cisleithanian crown lands, the paterfamilias was chained to his family by the agency of the state. Politics in the Monarchy and in the First Republic of German-Austria were dominated and wrecked by clashes over family law and divorce. However, in the fascist man the boundary between the liberal, public person and the private opinions of the paterfamilias dissolves. In the Monarchy, the pressure from above acted as a restraint on the monarch’s subject. Democratization would have required male self-education. Private rage over acts of public censorship became political orientation. The anti-Semitic diatribes at the Sunday lunch table became blueprints for campaign speeches. And were understood as such. This was intimate knowledge that the men had of each other as patresfamilias. And the Catholic Church knew it best of all. After all, one had to go to confession.

And Article 7 of the Austrian Constitution provides, “All nationals are equal before the law. Privileges based upon birth, sex, estate, class or religion are excluded.” For that reason, the patresfamilias lurk and observe to see if anyone has been given more. To see if anyone has been privileged. And, as in the case of the prohibition of Turkish, privileges are suspected everywhere. Privileges that can be used as a pretext for making moves to exclude and to prohibit. And it is as it already was at the end of the 19th century. Of course, the ways in which things are layered have changed somewhat. They are not so evident. But the party that is more bourgeois allows the party that is more nationalistic to do its ranting and raving on the right fringe. Just like the paterfamilias, who feels the need to work himself up over everything at the Sunday lunch table because he has been made so powerless. Precisely in this way the Freedom Party practices its politics of sadism, while the Austrian People’s Party sits by enjoying the attacks being made on people who have been singled out for exclusion. The readers of the Kronenzeitung do this with particular relish. The cynical question, “Is it funny or does it hurt?” is circulating in the Identitarian blogosphere. The ultimate criterion. Yet another way of applying the Nürnberg Laws of 15 September 1935.

We here have to keep learning it over and over, to keep trying to grasp it over and over. Neither the victims nor the perpetrators form a chorus. Individual actions are always what are at issue. What each individual has actually experienced is always what is at issue. We must recognize this fact and live with it. The attempt to assert a national destiny, a collective destiny, must be resisted. We must learn far better to look back at Nazi legislation in order to steer clear of it. We must learn once and for all that when speaking about the victims, the least we can do is to restore to each of them completely all titles and rights relating to citizenship. And we must learn to detect and do away with all the National Socialist manners of speaking that have become trivialized.

The goal ought to have been to avoid a repetition. The goal ought to have been to put language and culture so radically in question. The goal ought to have been to process the trauma not as a memory that swells before us but as knowledge firmly gained. That has not happened. We continue to speak in the grammar that engendered the Shoah. The few lexical taboos that exist are already becoming inoperative. “Is it funny or does it hurt?”

If it was possible for such a catastrophe as the Shoah to be made to happen; if a man-made catastrophe like the Shoah was able to create the inescapable necessity for persons being persecuted to live in the present at every moment of their lives. Then in order to prevent such an intolerable closing-in of lives, it is an imperative duty to resist at every moment even the slightest repetition of the conditions that led to such crimes.

We have come together here, and we mourn. Fulfilling one’s duty to attend to the dead is a description of the dignity of the living. I thank you for being able to take part in this act of commemoration.

(translation: Shawn Bryan)