



Fund for
Reconciliation,
Peace and
Cooperation:
Late Recognition
History
Tragic Fates

1938-1945

Forced Labor in Austria

Hubert Feichtlbauer



Imprint

Austrian Reconciliation Fund
(Publisher)

Hubert Feichtlbauer
(Author)

Scientific Advisor
Univ. Doz. Florian Freund

German Edition:
ISBN: 3-901116-21-4

English Edition:
ISBN: 3-901116-22-2

Published in German, English, Polish and Russian

Printed by Rema Print, Neulerchenfelder Straße 35, A-1160 Vienna,
on 100% chlorine-free bleached paper

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 **B R A I N T R U S T**
VERLAG FÜR WEITERBILDUNG

Schopenhauerstraße 36, A-1180 Vienna
www.braintrust.at



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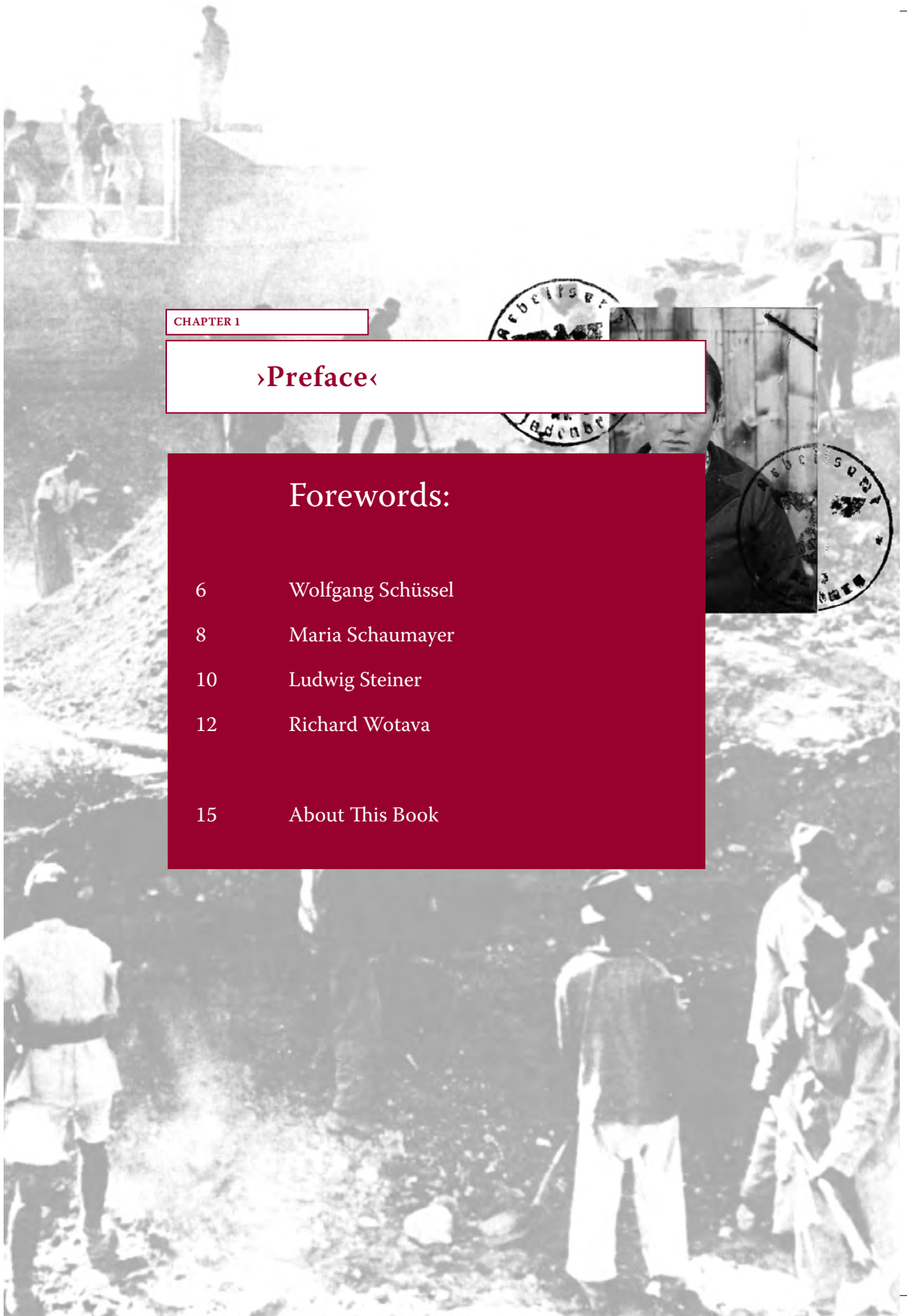
CHAPTER 1

›Preface‹

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A Gesture of Respect and Solidarity



For fifty-five years, the fate of the former slave and forced laborers who suffered such grave injustice on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria during the Third Reich was not regarded as Austria's problem. Today, there is a broad consensus that our country also has a moral responsibility to this group of victims, not least of all because of the complicity of large numbers of Austrians. In the first instance, this publication sets out to provide a detailed account of this gesture of respect and solidarity toward the former slave and forced laborers. However, this gesture also became a deeply humanitarian act, because until then, these victims of the Nazi regime had also been forgotten and sometimes even persecuted in their home countries.

At the same time, this publication also renders account. The Austrian Reconciliation Fund was originally endowed with six billion schillings, partly financed by taxes and partly by financial contributions from the Austrian business community. This publication enables taxpayers and the Austrian companies who participated to inform themselves once again about how these funds were used.

Only a few days after I took office as Austrian Chancellor in 2000, the former president of the Austrian National Bank, Dr. Maria Schaumayer, was appointed Special Government Representative for the Settlement of Slave and Forced Labor Related Issues. In less than five months, she successfully concluded the necessary international negotiations with a series of states, victims' associations and organizations, and drew up the draft for the so-called Reconciliation Fund Law. This was then unanimously passed by the two houses of the Austrian parliament, the Nationalrat and Bundesrat, in July 2000.

The Austrian Reconciliation Fund was constituted on December 20, 2000, and on the same day, Ambassador Dr. Steiner was appointed Chairman of the Committee and Ambassador Dr. Wotava Secretary General. Immediately afterward, the Fund commenced its work.



This approach enabled the Fund to make the best possible use of the period before the guarantee of legal peace upon which payments had been made conditional was given. On July, 31 2001, only three hours after I confirmed to the Fund that legal peace had been attained, instructions were given to the relevant bank to transfer payments to more than 20,000 former slave and forced laborers.

This sent a powerful message to the international public that Austria had only had to wait for the elimination of the final legal obstacles before it could start making symbolic payments to the former slave and forced laborers.

Since then, such symbolic payments totaling more than 352 million euros have been made to over 130,000 former slave and forced laborers.

As the Austrian Reconciliation Fund will still have money left over once it has completed its work, this will be used for other acts of redress in connection with the injustices perpetrated during Nazi rule on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria. This includes a significant amount of money that has already been made available in the form of advance payments to the Fund's six partner organizations in Central and Eastern Europe for humanitarian, but in particular for medical projects benefiting former slave and forced laborers.

The efficient but also humane manner in which the Reconciliation Fund Law was implemented by the Fund and its highly motivated staff have won Austria a great deal of goodwill.

I would therefore like to express my warmest thanks to all those who have helped us fulfill this task, be it by providing financial resources or through their work at the Reconciliation Fund.

Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel, Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria



We Did Not Want to Forget Anyone



With the establishment of the Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Co-operation that was unanimously agreed by all parliamentary parties in 2000, the Republic of Austria has critically confronted an unresolved chapter from the dark period of the Nazi regime. Victims' organizations and government bodies from those Central and Eastern European countries from which most of the slave and forced laborers came, as well as historians, contemporary witnesses and victims all played a constructive part in this process.

When Chancellor Schüssel called me in early February 2000 to ask me to become the government special representative for voluntary payments to slave and forced laborers who had been coerced into work on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria, he awakened childhood memories again. Suddenly, vivid memories came flooding back of people who had been forced to work under duress and under guard, whom we pitied but were unable to help.

Naturally, I agreed to take up this position in a voluntary capacity. Of course, I knew that the people on whose behalf I wanted to work, with a rapidly formed but extremely ambitious taskforce, were elderly and we could not afford to lose any time. We also sensed that after the defeat of the Nazi regime, victims had only rarely been able to find a life of their own that would have allowed them to forget the difficult period they spent as slave and forced laborers.

In our work for the Reconciliation Fund Law, we followed the mandate given to us by the Federal Government and the desire of victims' organizations to include as many victims as possible and to provide justice in a worthy form that took account of the different kinds of suffering. This awareness and our efforts led to differences between the Austrian and the German solutions, which proved advantageous to the victims. I am grateful to Chancellor Schüssel for accepting my suggestion to take a different approach than the Federal Republic of Germany and conduct separate—



albeit linked—negotiations with regard to human fates and unresolved restitution issues. This approach enabled us, in cooperation with Stuart Eizenstat, the US special representative for slave and forced-labor related issues, to quickly achieve legal peace in the USA. The Austrian Reconciliation Fund constituted in December 2000 under the chairmanship of the chancellor was thus able to start with the full and controlled payment of compensation to the elderly former slave and forced laborers in mid 2001, following the dismissal of the last class-action suit.

I am proud that with the help of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, Austria identified and included one group of victims who had not been covered by previous arrangements, namely those Hungarian Jews who had in the last months of the war been deported under indescribable conditions to the area around Vienna, to Strasshof and Laxenburg, to build the South Eastern Defensive Wall.

Austria has faced up to its moral obligations that arose from the tragic events of the Nazi period. The compensation payments made by the Reconciliation Fund should show the victims of Nazi slave and forced labor that Austria has understood their suffering, that it has compassion, and will continue efforts to achieve permanent reconciliation. May this moral and humanitarian gesture bring peace and liberation to both sides.

*Dr. Maria Schaumayer,
Special Government Representative for Forced Labor Related Issues*

Responsibility Cannot Be Shared



The law concerning the foundation of the Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Co-operation was passed by all the members of the Nationalrat. This unanimity clearly shows the importance that the legislator, and thus the representatives of the Austrian voters, attributed to this gesture from the Republic towards former slave laborers and forced laborers. This fact, and likewise the naming of the Fund, placed high demands on the sense of responsibility, the empathy, expert knowledge and productive capacity of our employees from the very outset.

The name of our Fund begins with the word "Reconciliation." It was clear to all of us that we cannot demand reconciliation from those men and women whose sad lot it was to suffer forced labor. Our work allowed us, and indeed required us to do our utmost to create an atmosphere in which reconciliation is offered to victims and at best can be experienced by them. In view of the forced laborers' advanced age and the health damage suffered by most, it was imperative that in addition to accurately carrying out our daily work, everything possible had to be done to avoid omissions, delays and bureaucratic obstacles. The objective was to exhaust every conceivable possibility to reach all those victims who were still alive. On its own initiative, Austria could only offer survivors of forced labor a gesture of deepest sympathy and of understanding, to recognize them as victims of the Nazi regime. It was particularly distressing to hear that on returning to their home countries, a great number of the victims still were not granted their full freedom. The material aspect of the Republic's gesture is being raised by the generations whose work now finances it. Through a great number of publications and discussions, it was possible to give them a better understanding of the moral necessity and the significance of their efforts towards overcoming the shadows of the past and towards permanently strengthening peaceful co-existence in Europe.

Because "old" responsibilities and debts cannot merely be cleared away by "wanting to forget." However regrettable it is that this gesture is very late in coming, it must at least be realized to the greatest extent possible.



When we commenced our work, we were frequently asked: "Why do you only take care of former forced laborers from the distant past instead of doing more to support victims of international human rights violations today?"

There is only one answer to that: "We took on the task with which we have been entrusted out of conviction, and we want to fulfill it to the best of our ability." We are by no means indifferent to the misery in the world around us today. Quite the opposite, dealing with the fate of the forced laborers strengthened our conviction that all human rights violations must be combated from the word go and with full commitment. It also strengthened our will, our awareness and our sense of responsibility to give our full support to the peaceful development of relationships between nations.

The human and political significance of our task was without doubt deeply felt by all of us in our daily work. This also applies to the cooperation with our partner organizations to a great degree. Peaceful cooperation is not only found in declarations of intent, international agreements and treaties in big politics, but also in the manner in which one implements and makes tangible the contents of such declarations, agreements and treaties in individual areas of responsibility.

It was a marvelous experience for me to work together with this extremely committed team on an important task in the interests of the former forced laborers, but also in the well-understood interest of our identity as Austrians. All the more so, as it is not presumptuous to say that we have come very close to meeting the high targets of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund.

*Ambassador Dr. Ludwig Steiner,
Chairman of the Committee of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund*

With a Committed Young Team



In 1943 when I was ten years old, my mother sent me to stay with a farming family she knew in Lower Austria in order to escape the food shortages in Vienna and spend a few weeks eating plain but healthy food. While I was there, I met a Ukrainian boy who was only three years older than me. At the tender age of 13, he had been deported to the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria to carry out forced labor. Although we could barely communicate with him, we could see that by nature he was a cheerful young man. However, every now and again, he was overcome by melancholy and sadness—probably because he could not understand why he had been carried off from his home and his family to a strange and foreign country although still a child.

The young Ukrainian worked hard on the farm, and given the lack of able-bodied men, most of whom had been conscripted into the armed forces, made an important contribution to maintaining food production during the war, which in many areas would have collapsed without the millions of men and women coerced by the Nazi system of forced labor.

Of course at the time, I could have no idea that after retiring from the Austrian foreign service, I would spend five years dealing with issues related to forced laborers in my capacity as Secretary General of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund. It was only natural that as Secretary General of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund I also remembered the young Ukrainian forced laborer who had been deported to Austria from Ukraine at just 13 years of age. I asked myself whether his name had been submitted to our Fund by the Ukrainian partner organization to receive voluntary symbolic compensation for his forced labor. My investigations showed that this was the case, and we were both delighted when, after more than sixty years, I was reunited with my forced-laborer friend (for we had indeed got on very well and occasionally played soccer together) in Lviv in April 2005, where, with the help of an interpreter, we reminisced about the time we had spent together on the Lower Austrian farm.



As the Secretary General of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, I was repeatedly asked during my lectures and in discussions why forced laborers who had worked in the agricultural sector also received financial compensation, albeit a symbolic amount, since this group of forced laborers had fared considerably better than some of their fellow countrymen in their home countries. Due to my childhood experiences with the young Ukrainian mentioned above, it was easy for me to rebut such arguments with reference to the enormously important contribution they had made in maintaining the food supply for the domestic population, and also because of the youth of many of those forced laborers who had been deported.

The fact that forced laborers from the agricultural sector were also included in the Austrian Reconciliation Fund's compensation scheme generated a positive response from the international community, which very much appreciated that the Reconciliation Fund had been created and so generously and voluntarily endowed.

After my formal appointment by the Board of Trustees as Secretary General of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, I set about finding suitable office premises and recruiting the necessary personnel. I was surprised that within a fairly short period of time I was able to recruit highly competent, committed men and women with the necessary language skills and suitable personalities for the task ahead, and who subsequently got on wonderfully with each other. With their help, it was possible to carry out the difficult and complex task of tracking down forced laborers from 61 countries—and now spread throughout the world—who fell within the remit of the Reconciliation Fund, and then transferring to them the compensation payments which they had been awarded. It was a pleasure to work with this committed young team that responded so willingly to all the ideas that were put forward when we defined our working procedures. Team members also repeatedly made new suggestions of their own, which were then adopted in practice. Just how successful we were at breaking completely new ground can be seen from the fact that while verifying applications from former slave laborers from the former Soviet Union, we were even able to study the documents of the Soviet secret service, which had subjected each returning forced laborer to detailed interrogations by a so-called filtration committee.



The staff at the Austrian Reconciliation Fund worked even more zealously as thousands of former forced laborers made clear how much they appreciated the fact that the Reconciliation Fund recognized them for the first time as victims of the National Socialist regime—recognition that in many cases had been denied them in their own countries. For many thousands of forced laborers living in Eastern Europe, the financial payment made by the Austrian Reconciliation Fund also brought about a crucial improvement in their quality of life, for example by enabling them to buy expensive medicines and medical equipment and other necessities.

The work of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, which by and large was extremely satisfying and much appreciated both in Austria and abroad, and which was of great national political significance, would not have been possible without the commitment of all those working for the Fund.

Now that the Fund has completed its work, we can say without false modesty that the endowment of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund provided by the Austrian taxpayers was surely a good investment with regard to promoting international understanding and harmonious international relationships. It has already generated positive results and will continue to do so in the future.

*Ambassador Dr. Richard Wotava,
Secretary General of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund*



About This Book

The concept behind this book was established in cooperation with the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, which was founded in 2000 with the aim of implementing a financial gesture of recognition and respect towards the people who were coerced into forced labor under the Nazi regime in what is present-day Austria. It was clear from the start that a portrayal of Nazi forced labor must also depict this in the overall context of this terrible time. Some ten million people from other nations were coerced to work as forced laborers in the former German Reich, with the aim of stigmatizing them as inferior and at the same time exploiting their productive capacity for Germany's war economy. In 1944, there were around one million forced laborers in Austria in comparison to roughly 1.7 million "free" Austrian workers.

There are a number of important works by renowned academics that cover aspects of this issue. This book builds on these works, yet makes no claims to completeness. It also looks into the question of why the issue of forced labor only became a matter for international negotiations at such a late date. Furthermore, it describes the process of these negotiations under the direction of Special Government Representative Maria Schaumayer, and describes the foundation of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund and how it functions. Comparisons are also drawn with Switzerland and the Federal Republic of Germany. Political and legal reports are brought to life through personal accounts from those affected.

The book is published by the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, and it is written in a fairly informal style that aims to facilitate reading. Therefore the selected formulations fall solely under the author's journalistic responsibility. The author vouches for the correctness of the personal accounts that are rendered, and for the authenticity of the people's names that are only given in abbreviated form. Although such names are often written out in full in other books of this kind, no one should be put in an awkward situation as a result of this statement of accounts. Names have only been written in full at the request of the persons concerned, or if their express permission has been granted.



"Reconciliation Fund" always refers to the Austrian Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Co-operation, the full title of which outlines the objectives of the program. "Austria" always refers to the part of the German Reich at that time that constitutes the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria. Further literature on the subject is listed at the end of the book, and all individual quotations are duly documented.

The book is published in German, English, Polish and Russian and is supported by the website www.reconciliationfund.at, which is also available in these four languages. A brochure and a CD-ROM are also available for school presentations in addition to this book.

I would like to thank the following individuals and institutes for their support: the Fund, in particular Chairman of the Committee Ludwig Steiner and Secretary General Richard Wotava for providing valuable information and enabling independent work; university lecturer Florian Freund for his indispensable academic advice; everyone who volunteered to take part in extensive one-to-one interviews, in particular: Maria Schaumayer, Heinz Kessler, Ambassador Hans Winkler, spot-check directors Herbert Grubmayr and Erich Schmid, Deputy Committee Chairman Christoph Kainz, Martin Eichinger, Univ. Prof. Gerald Stourzh, attorney Michael Kutschera, and Saul Kagan of the Jewish Claims Committee New York. Special thanks goes to all employees from the Reconciliation Fund office under the management of Ulrike Renezeder-Dirisamer and Jürgen Strasser for their willingness to provide information and patient text revision.

Hubert Feichtlbauer, Author

›Guilt and Atonement‹

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Remembrance Is the Key Word

Austria labors under a heavy burden due to the sloppy way it has dealt with the question of guilt and atonement. Who is responsible for what? Who must atone for whose wrongdoings? Is it even possible to make reparation? Is there such a thing as collective guilt? If not (as virtually all moral philosophies agree), are all those who did not participate in bloody deeds free of responsibility? If not, is it enough to recognize injustice, to admit the wrongful conduct of past generations? Must recompense be made as well? If so, how much?

Of course, Austria is not alone in having failed to solve this problem in a satisfactory manner. Almost everyone bears a burden of shame, qualms of conscience and repressed guilt. Almost all states are familiar with this burden as well. However, this does not release each individual state from its obligation to remember. Pointing the finger at others does not free one from one's own guilt. "Remembrance is the key word that links the past and the present, the past and the future," wrote Elie Wiesel, author of the book *Adam oder das Geheimnis des Anfangs*, "a reflection upon brotherly primeordial forms". "Jewish history," he writes "takes place in the present ... Job is very much present among us today. ... Somewhere, a father and a son approach an altar upon which the sacrificial fire is already burning."

Is it only Jewish history that takes place in the present? And while according to Jewish and Christian religious beliefs the Jews received their calling and mission earlier, is the same not equally true of the other peoples of the earth? As Wiesel also says, each individual recognizes himself in Adam. "With one difference: we have a past, he does not To make up for this injustice, God gave him a future." If one accepts the Judeo-Christian creation myth, which still exercises a decisive influence upon European and American culture today, when the first human couple was cast out from Paradise because they had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge and thus learned to distinguish right from wrong, it represented the "end of man's natural tutelage" and "condemnation to responsibility" as Herbert Gamper wrote in the Burgtheater program for Ödon von Horváth's drama on guilt, *Der jüngste Tag*, in December 2000. Before the apple in the Garden of Eden was eaten, there was blind obedience. Afterwards, there was insight and



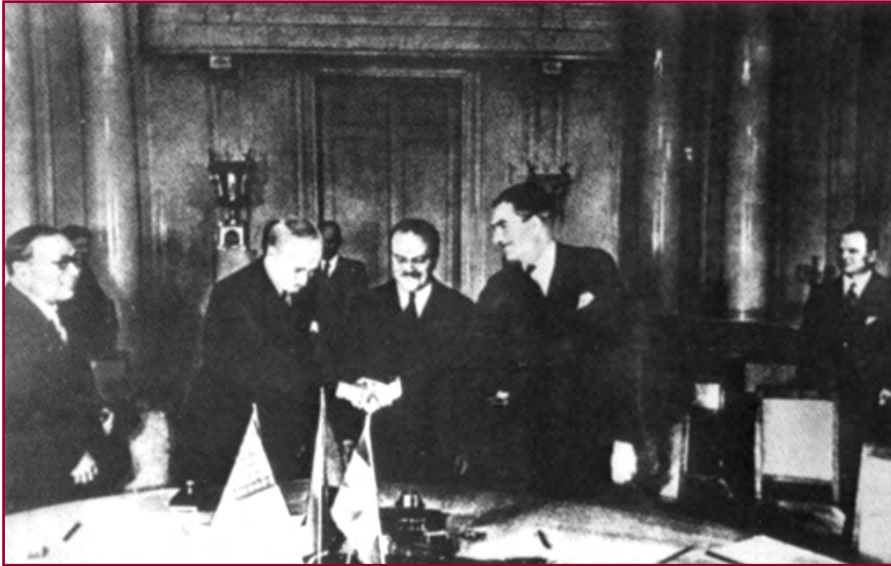
responsibility. For all time. That is what distinguishes the Christian-Jewish worldview and its idea of Man from that of the ancient Greeks, who saw the inexplicable will of the gods behind the blows of fate that humans had to accept without being able to change them.

For more than a thousand years, the Judeo-Christian creation myth has shaped European thought to a great degree. It still distinguishes the worldview of even non-religious people in modern Europe and related civilizations from that of cultures with a more fatalistic orientation. Only on the basis of such convictions is it even possible to conduct a debate about guilt and atonement, individual and collective responsibility, and the possibility of forgiving, but never forgetting.

The Ambiguity of the Moscow Declaration

Has Austria faced up to this responsibility? "The nation fought alongside Nazi Germany but long managed to escape its past with the help of an ironic witticism straight from a Viennese coffeehouse: 'Austria has managed to convince itself and the world that Beethoven was an Austrian and Hitler was a German.'" This is what we read in Stuart E. Eizenstat's fascinating book, *Imperfect Justice: Looted Assets, Slave Labor and the Unfinished Business of World War II* (2003). Indeed, legions of critics accuse Austria of employing this "trick" when it cites the Moscow Declaration, which was made public on November 1, 1943, at a conference of the foreign ministers of the USA, Great Britain and the Soviet Union in Moscow.

In the Moscow Declaration, the ministers Cordell Hull, Anthony Eden and Vyacheslav Molotov agreed "that Austria, the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression, shall be liberated from German domination," saying that they regarded "the annexation imposed on Austria by Germany on March 15, 1938, as null and void." They declared that they wished to see a free and independent Austria re-established, while at the same time reminding Austria "that she has a responsibility which she cannot evade, for participation in the war at the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own



The signing of the Moscow Declaration on November 1, 1943, by the foreign ministers of the USA, Great Britain and the Soviet Union: "Austria" or "the Austrians"?

Source: Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft/Staatsverlag der DDR

contribution to her own liberation." The incorrect date of the annexation, which was proclaimed on March 13 and not 15, was not the only error in this formulation. How could the contradiction be resolved that "the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression" (this was the way all Allied radio broadcasts to Austria were introduced in the last year of the war) should also bear shared responsibility for its participation in Hitler's wars? As Manfred Rauchensteiner recalled in his address at the ceremony commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Moscow Declaration, the drafts of the Declaration drawn up by the British Foreign Ministry had included this contradiction from the very outset: After the war Austria should be treated better than Germany, but punished for "its misdeeds in the past." A touch of ambiguity of this kind was not such a bad thing, according to a high-ranking Foreign Office official in London. The only argument was whether Austria would become part of a south German state either automatically or voluntarily (as envisaged by the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill) or whether this was in fact even desirable. Eventually, Minister of Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden prevailed with his rejection of a southern German state.



Moscow Declaration 1943

The governments of the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States of America are agreed that Austria, the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression, shall be liberated from German domination.

They regard the annexation imposed on Austria by Germany on March 15, 1938, as null and void. They consider themselves as in no way bound by any changes effected in Austria since that date. They declare that they wish to see re-established a free and independent Austria

and thereby to open the way for the Austrian people themselves as well as those neighboring states which will be faced with similar problems, to find that political and economic security which is the only basis of lasting peace.

Austria is reminded, however, that she has a responsibility, which she cannot evade, for participation in the war at the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own contribution to her liberation.

Austria or the Austrians?

Another amendment to the original drafts was to have more far-reaching consequences. It was only at the conference of ministers itself that the deputy foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Andrei Vyshinsky, spoke out on this issue and proposed that "Austria" and not, as envisaged in the latest draft, "the Austrian people," should be called to account for participation in Hitler's war. The Western powers agreed. The British-US formulation would in fact have reflected the actual legal situation correctly, (between 1938 and 1945, no Austrian state as a subject of international law existed that could have participated in war and other crimes alongside Nazi Germany), while at the same time rightly addressing the guilt of Austrian men and women for such crimes. And of course, there were institutions in Austria in the non-state and social sectors that after the occupation by Hitler's troops continued to exist and that were able, at least to a limited degree, to act.

In the years that followed, the Moscow Declaration became the basis for all important statements regarding Austria, all the more so as the French Committee of National Liberation became a signatory to the Moscow Declaration on November 16, 1943. Somewhat controversial today is the Declaration of Independence proclaimed by the provisional chancellor Karl Renner on April 27, 1945, which referred to the "people of Austria who had been robbed of their will and made completely powerless" and led by Hitler into "a senseless and hopeless war of aggression which no Austrian had ever wanted." Günter Bischoff is one of the most critical of the many historians who have objected to this. "From today's perspective, this text abounds with internal inconsistencies and historic half-truths and untruths" he wrote in his chapter *Opfer Österreich?* [Austria: a Victim?] of the volume edited by Dieter Stiefel *Die politische Ökonomie des Holocaust* [The Political Economy of the Holocaust] (2001).

Renner concealed both the role played by many Austrian Nazi criminals as well as all resistance against the Nazi regime, much of which he was probably unaware, and rejected significant Austrian reparations on the grounds that the "people are exhausted" and "the country stripped of its



On April 27, 1945, Chancellor Karl Renner proclaimed the birth of the new Austria in front of Parliament.

Source: APA Images

assets." (p. 308) Of course this was easy to prove at the time—as was the fact that the "theory of occupation" on the basis of the Moscow Declaration was not something that had been mainly "constructed by the crafty lawyers at the Foreign Ministry." In essence, this theory claims that the military occupation of Austria by the German army did not make Austria a part of Germany under international law, so that between March 1938 and April 1945 it had been unable to take any legally binding actions. The passage concerning Austria in the Nuremberg indictments against the main war criminals spoke of the "occupation of Austria." That is why in 1955 a State Treaty and not a Peace



Treaty was concluded, and then only between the four main allied powers and Austria, and not with all states of the anti-Hitler coalition. The same arguments had also formed the basis for the agreement reached in Potsdam in 1945, that no demands for reparations would be made upon Austria. But the consequences of the annexation theory put forward by other legal experts, according to which Austria had completely ceased to exist as a state in 1938, were in this case absolutely identical. The Republic of Austria could not be held responsible under international law for the actions of the National Socialist regime. The fact that the resurrected Republic of Austria also referred to the Moscow Declaration in this context was not therefore a trick, but a self-evident political truth. This was clearly explained by, amongst others, the Austrian historian Gerald Stourzh, in his book *Um Einheit und Freiheit. Staatsvertrag, Neutralität und das Ende der Ost-West-Besetzung Österreichs 1945–1955* [On Unity and Freedom. The State Treaty, Neutrality and the End of the East-West Occupation of Austria 1945–1955] (1998).

Figl Recalls Molotov

Politically relevant texts always have an "advocatory function," because it is a law of political argumentation that "where an existing text is available, the most favorable statements will be taken up and emphasized," while those that are less favorable are at the very least "underexposed," Stourzh writes. "It was out of the question for the Austrian government to reject the opportunity presented by the Allies in the first part of the Moscow Declaration." (p. 26) Put in less scholarly terms, one could hypothetically pose the question as to whether Leopold Figl, who suffered in Dachau concentration camp from 1938 to 1943 and in Mauthausen from 1944 to 1945, and was a member of the provisional Renner government from its inception, finally succeeding Renner as chancellor after the elections in November 1945, should have proclaimed to the world: "The Allies have made a mistake: we Austrians are cheats, we were not victims but National Socialist perpetrators, so do not treat us any better than the Germans!?" Figl's first government consisted of representatives of the People's Party and the Socialist (now the Social Democratic) Party. On average, it had



Chancellor Leopold Figl at the memorial to victims at Mauthausen concentration camp.

Source: DÖW

17 members, twelve to fourteen of whom had been victims of National Socialist persecution, and some of whom had also been imprisoned in concentration camps. In 1948, Figl announced at a cabinet meeting that he would take part in a memorial service for a Russian general who had been murdered at Mauthausen concentration camp: "He was imprisoned two cells away from me." It was also Figl who in the final phase of the negotiations for an Austrian State Treaty pressed for the deletion of a passage concerning "Austria's complicity." However, at the inter-governmental round of negotiations in Moscow in April 1955, he was unable to overcome Soviet resistance. It

was only at the last conference of foreign ministers in Vienna on May 14, 1955, one day before the signing of the treaty, that he was able to push it through. Once again, as when the Moscow Declaration had been formulated twelve years earlier, Molotov was foreign minister. And Figl recalled—to the horror of Austrian witnesses—how he had heard the voice of Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov over the loudspeakers of Dachau concentration camp when Molotov and the German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop signed the German-Soviet non-aggression pact in summer 1939. However, Molotov did not explode and the clause about Austrian complicity was stricken from the State Treaty.

Gerald Stourzh also provides yet more proof of the importance of the Allied declaration that Austria had been a victim of Hitler's expansionist policy. In the years following the end of National Socialist rule, this categorization had greatly supported efforts to emphasize the "Austrian" over the "German." The promotion of a separate Austrian national feeling, perhaps sometimes even a little too strenuously, certainly decisively strengthened the will to national independence and autonomy. If Austria had rejected this status as a liberated country for itself, it would have been one of three



states to emerge from the ruins of the German Reich and—in a logical continuation of this interpretation—would have had to choose membership in either the Western or the Eastern military alliance (or would have been forced to join one of the two or might even have been partitioned). After the end of World War II and before the intensification of the Cold War, no one was able to foresee how the future would develop. By taking this decision, the position adopted by Austria was not only advantageous; to some degree it was also risky.

The True Omissions

Stourzh, therefore, arrived at the well-founded conclusion that it was "not the reference to the state of Austria as a victim of Hitlerite aggression that should be called into question. It is something else that ought to be commented upon critically: First of all, beyond the question of legal responsibility, the lack of moral understanding that it can be appropriate to feel shame for the misdeeds of one's compatriots, even where there is no individual guilt; and secondly, the practice, in keeping with a long Austrian tradition, of acting narrow-mindedly in the administration of justice where voluntary generosity supported by far-sighted political will would have been the better policy, because it would have been morally more convincing." (p. 27) This indeed is where Austria failed in the years after 1945 when the National Socialist regime had been liquidated and specific consequences taken—but only hesitantly, formalistically, restrictively and often enough, only under external pressure. Former National Socialists were not treated with kid gloves. In the ten years they existed, the special People's Courts established to try them brought more than 28,000 cases to trial and passed more than 23,000 verdicts, of which 13,000 were guilty verdicts. These courts also passed 43 death sentences, 30 of which were carried out, and imposed prison sentences totaling 30,000 years. The Austrians were well aware that almost all these cases concerned Austrians. And they were equally aware that two of the main war criminals condemned by the Allied tribunal in Nuremberg in 1946 (Arthur Seyss-Inquart and Ernst Kaltenbrunner) were Austrians. Hence, it is not true that Nazi guilt was not discussed in Austria after 1945 or that for decades



After 1945, Austrian "people's courts" imposed severe penalties on Nazis found guilty of crimes (43 death sentences, terms of imprisonment totaling more than 30,000 years), however, amnesties and a lack of interest in investigating the crimes soon put an end to this.

Source: ONB

nobody heard anything about Austrian wrongdoers. Some 270,000 former Nazis lost their jobs or their pensions or their homes or all of these things. Others who kept their jobs had to pay "atonement payments" in the form of income tax surcharges. Some 500,000 people were deprived of their voting rights because their participation in the birth of the newly founded democratic republic was not desired. However, it is also true that pardons, debt remissions and amnesties were given. Prison sentences were often drastically reduced. Those with university degrees and specialists were rapidly reintegrated into the working world, because they were needed for reconstruction. After 1949, most former Nazis were granted the right to vote again as one did not want to alienate half a million people from the new democratic state. There was an undignified rush to win their votes, and prosecution and punishment decreased. A number of war crimes trials ended with embarrassing "not guilty" verdicts due to "lack of evidence." While the law forbidding the resurrection of Nazi activity is still in force today (in an even stricter form than originally), other emergency legislation was abolished and efforts made to achieve "normality". Even so, after the signing of the State Treaty in 1955, juries found 18 people guilty of



National Socialist crimes, three of whom were sentenced to life imprisonment. Soon, however, there was no longer any tangible will to carry out systematic investigations and, unlike Germany, Austria did not establish a central agency at the provincial offices for the administration of justice to prosecute Nazi crimes.

As Hans Winkler, head of the International Law Office of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, perspicuously wrote in his article for *Politische Ökonomie des Holocaust*, the "victim theory," which correctly was limited to the state, had with time, "taken on a life of its own" (p. 263) and become the symbol of defensive forms of behavior—according to the principle "what does National Socialism have to do with us? It was something that suddenly overwhelmed us in 1938 and in 1945 we were liberated from it..." On the other hand, it should also not be forgotten that many Austrians had experienced four regime changes in their lives. In 1918, the collapse of the vast empire, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in 1934, the end of democracy in the authoritarian corporate state, in 1938, the invasion by Hitler's Germany and in 1945, the re-establishment of the democratic republic. This meant five constitutions, five oaths for civil servants, five occasions when the government demanded that people change their ways of thinking—it is easy to imagine the opportunistic pressure to conform under such circumstances! People finally wanted to put this unhappy past behind them and make a new start.

Victims Not Left Empty Handed

And what about compensation for the victims, which of course had also been paid? As Elie Wiesel once accurately wrote, "not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims." Almost 130,000 were driven out of Austria after having been humiliated terribly, damned and robbed, with their wealth plundered through "Aryanization." Some 65,000 other less fortunate were murdered in cold blood by the National Socialist regime. To place them all at the top of the list of victims today would be frivolous, if we were not to recall at the same time the anti-Semitism that had been cultivated and stirred up for centuries, not least of all by Christian preachers and writers.



Vienna after the German invasion in March 1938: Anti-jewish slogans on the windows of Jewish-owned shops.

Source: DÖW

For while this did not create Auschwitz, it significantly lowered the inhibition threshold. Over the last two decades, this has all been discussed many times, and also sincerely lamented by a broad public, but in the period immediately following National Socialist rule and the war, a curtain of silence was drawn over it. The silence was broken not least of all by Austrian historians, in particular Erika Weinzierl. In addition to the Jewish victims, thousands of non-Jewish Austrians were murdered in concentration camps, and thousands more in Gestapo prisons. Over 2,000 Austrian citizens were also executed by the Nazi regime for active participation in the resistance.

In 1945, the Republic of Austria started by providing victims with a minimal basis for their livelihood, passing a Victims' Welfare Act, which made arrangements for voluntary payments—since the state was under no obligation. This law was then repeatedly amended to include new categories of victims who in the past had been left empty handed. In 1945, only those who had been persecuted for political reasons were included, to be followed in subsequent years by Jews, Slovenes, Roma and Sinti, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Victims of persecution who were living abroad were only included in 1956, and it was not until 1995 that victims of forced ster-



ilization were included. Moreover, the various categories of victims were not treated equally from the beginning (the Roma, for example, only decades later). "Foreign policy considerations and pressure from the Western Allies, above all the USA, remained one of the main compelling forces behind all measures in favor of Nazi victims," historian Brigitte Bailer-Galanda wrote in *Die Politische Ökonomie des Holocaust*, edited by Dieter Stiefel, summing up the shortcomings of the Austrian establishment in this area.

The willingness of the Austrian public to spend large amounts of money on compensation for Nazi victims in times of tight national budgets was inhibited by the widespread feeling that the "balance sheet" of victims also included those suffering deprivation as a result of the war and bombing, the 260,000 Austrian soldiers who had fallen, the 15,000 to 20,000 Austrians who had died as a result of Allied air raids, and the homes and livelihoods that had been destroyed, for which there was virtually no compensation. The indisputable difference weighed little in emotional terms for those who were personally affected.

The Allies had established Austria's obligation to reverse confiscations and spurious asset transfers as early as 1943. Between 1945 and 1949, seven Restitution Acts were passed—not because the willingness to do something was steadily increasing, but because new gaps repeatedly had to be closed. On the legal basis of the State Treaty of 1955, collection agencies were established in 1957 for heirless Jewish and heirless non-Jewish assets. The income was then distributed to individuals and charitable organizations. Following negotiations with the Jewish Claims Committee, an "aid fund" for victims of political persecution residing abroad was set up in 1956, with two additional endowments being made at later dates. Under the terms of the War and Persecution-Related Material Damage Act of 1958, compensation was paid for household goods and business equipment. This law treated (as generally provided for by Article 26 of the State Treaty) war casualties and victims of political persecution equally and laid down income limits.

The 1961 Compensation Fund Act attempted to provide compensation for those who had been persecuted on the grounds of their race or religion for the loss of bank accounts and cash and the like. At the same time, the



Austrian Jewish Community (IKG) received a (very modest) recompense for its lost assets and, more importantly, has ever since received annual payments from the state to help cover its current expenses.

Why Germany Pays as Well

In 1962, the Bad Kreuznach Agreement was signed with the Federal Republic of Germany under which Germany would in the future bear the costs of just under one-third of Austrian compensation payments. Was this yet another Austrian trick? It depends on how you see it: between 1959 and 1964, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland all signed similar agreements with Germany on the legally undisputed basis that the Federal Republic of Germany had declared itself to be at least the partial legal successor of the German Reich with all resulting consequences. Of course, in this connection it should be acknowledged that from the very outset German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer clearly and impressively admitted his country's moral responsibility and not just its liability under international law.

In 1969 and 1985, the Artistic and Cultural Assets Settlement Acts regulated the return of illegally appropriated works of art, and in 1998 an important addition was made. In 1995, on the 50th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Republic, the Austrian National Fund was established from which Nazi victims received symbolic lump-sum compensation payments of 70,000 schillings (5,080 euros) and in cases of hardship, double or triple this amount if they had been persecuted for political or religious reasons or because of their sexual orientation, race or national origin, physical or mental disability or because of alleged anti-social behavior or had been forced to flee. Finally, a comprehensive definition of all grounds for persecution that also included victims of forced sterilization and euthanasia as well as homosexuals had been drawn up.



A Missed Opportunity in 1955

It is difficult to ascertain how much money the Republic of Austria had paid out under all these titles by the end of the 20th century. No matter what amounts were calculated and revaluated in an effort to establish their present value, they were all fraught with contradiction. This book will not, therefore, enter into a discussion about the figures. But even excluding pension and nursing care payments and other welfare benefits for Nazi victims, the amount still runs into tens of billions of Austrian schillings. The historian Dieter Stiefel, who has dealt with this issue in great depth (and critically) reached the significant conclusion that the "Republic of Austria in fact did a great deal to confront its past. That this was never acknowledged has to do with the fact that it almost always proceeded hesitantly, and usually under pressure from the Allies." (*Politische Ökonomie des Holocaust*, p. 27) However, it is also a fact that in an effort to take account of public opinion, payments for victims were coupled with payments to former Wehrmacht soldiers whenever possible, which in practice also frequently benefited former members of the Waffen SS. So while the Allies repeatedly urged Austria to improve its payments (which under international law had always been made voluntarily), given the empty coffers and considerable war damage that needed to be repaired, these payments were unlikely ever to be more than symbolic gestures.

A suggestion made by Ludwig Steiner, who was later to become deputy foreign minister, to use the conclusion of the State Treaty as an opportunity to make a serious effort to arrive at a settlement by introducing a temporary special tax and using the proceeds to generously compensate Nazi victims, was unfortunately not taken up in 1955. A second similarly favorable opportunity never presented itself again. However, the case of Kurt Waldheim led to a lengthy and painful debate, which weighed heavily upon both Austria and the international community.

The former UN Secretary General, who was elected President of Austria in 1986, suffered a great injustice because he was neither a war criminal nor even "only" a National Socialist. But his reactions (formulated from the perspective of earlier years) to a constant stream of new accusations led to an extensive and far-reaching debate in Austria, which took on the



character of a catharsis, a painful airing of the national soul. In the course of these debates, the country awoke to a sober awareness of the kind described with such timeless validity by the Lebanese-American writer and moral philosopher Khalil Gibran in his famous work *The Prophet*: "And as a single leaf turns not yellow but with the silent knowledge of the whole tree, So the wrong-doer cannot do wrong without the hidden will of you all."

Victims, Perpetrators and Spectators

This was indeed the bitterest insight for many Austrians: that during the National Socialist tyranny, there had not only been victims and perpetrators among them, but also spectators, accessories and accomplices motivated by egotism, cowardice or sheer opportunism. Of course, neither should it be forgotten that even the smallest gesture of resistance could threaten liberty or even life, and that opportunism is a strategy for survival not only in the kingdom of nature, but also in every human society. Heroes are always in the minority. But life-saving conformity does not necessarily have to lead to an undignified currying of favor.

All this was spoken of by the politicians of the first hour. The minutes of a cabinet meeting on November 9, 1948, recorded Minister of the Interior Oskar Helmer as having said: "We can't simply blame the Greater German Reich for what was taken from the Jews. A great deal of it was attributable to our dear fellow citizens." British historian Robert Knight gave an account of this in his edition of the minutes of the Council of Ministers: *Ich bin dafür, die Sache in die Länge zu ziehen* [I am for dragging out the matter] (1988). However, it is only Helmer's second sentence, from which the book takes its title, that is ever quoted. These words were spoken at the same cabinet meeting that discussed what answer ought to be given to a US government envoy, who had urged the establishment of a fund for impoverished Jewish returnees. Minister of Planning Peter Krauland said it had to be taken into consideration that, "There are 9,000 Jews currently living in Vienna. Their situation is pitiful ... There is no question of not helping them if necessary." But in the spirit of Helmer's famous-

Restitution and Compensation: Past Measures Undertaken by Austria Since 1945

1945 Victims' Welfare Act (amended or supplemented more than 60 times): Austrians who had been persecuted for political reasons, and later for other reasons, receive victims' pensions and help seeking housing and work (victim ID); flaws and injustices are only slowly remedied.

1945 Registration Act: Required the registration of all property that had been "Aryanized" or otherwise taken by the National Socialist regime.

1946 Annulment Act: All legal transactions and other legal acts concerning the seizure of property by Nazi authorities are declared null and void.

1946 to 1949 seven Restitution Claims Acts: Required restitution by the state, individuals and legal persons of properties, companies, patents, brands, design copyrights and employment contracts; unclear provisions, excessively short claim periods and loopholes in the law lead to new injustices.

1952 Public Servants Compensation Act: Public servants receive (a very small amount of) compensation for loss of income.

1956 Assistance Fund Act: 550 million schillings (40 million euros) are provided to assist victims of political persecution not residing in Austria (until 1964, reactivated in 1974).

1957 Collection Agencies Act: Two collection agencies were established for heirless or "dormant" Jewish property (collection point A) and heirless or "dormant" non-Jewish property (collection point B); some 180 million schillings (13 million euros) were allocated at a ratio of 80:20.

1958 War and Persecution-Related Material Damage Act: Lump sum compensation payments are made for damage to household goods and business premises and equipment incurred as a result of war or political persecution—irrespective of the claimant's income.

1958 Insurance Indemnification Act: Compensation of insurance claims that had been demonstrably confiscated.

1961 Compensation Fund: Provides federal moneys for the establishment of a fund to compensate property losses suffered by victims of political and religious persecution.

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1962 Financial Settlement Treaty (Bad Kreuznach Agreement) between Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany to indemnify victims of political persecution and those who were expelled after 1945; Germany contributed DM 125 million for these resettlers and also participated in the Assistance and Compensation funds.

1969 First Artistic and Cultural Assets Settlement Act: Works of art not covered by the Restitution Acts are returned.

1985 Second Artistic and Cultural Assets Settlement Act: Stolen works of art whose owners could no longer be identified are auctioned off (Mauerbach Auction) and 88 percent of the total proceeds of 155 million schillings transferred to the Jewish Communities in Austria (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde IKG) and twelve percent to three concentration camp victims' associations to be disbursed to needy members.

1995 National Fund Act: Individuals who prior to 1938 had been Austrian citizens or who had been resident in Austria for at least ten years before this date and who were then persecuted by the Nazi regime or forced to flee for political rea-

sons or on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, disability or alleged "anti-social" behavior, receive 70,000 (in cases of hardship 140,000 or 210,000) schillings (today 5,080 or 10,160 or 15,240 euro).

1998 Return of Works of Art from Austrian Federal Museums and Collections: Works of art and cultural treasures that in 1945 had come into the possession of Austrian museums by means of (disputed) "donations" and "dedications," and had previously been the subject of transactions that in 1946 had been declared null and void are returned to their original owners.

(According to Thomas Herko, "Die Frage der ehemaligen Zwangsarbeiter unter nationalsozialistischem Regime auf dem Gebiet der heutigen Republik Österreich – Der Weg zur Errichtung des Österreichischen Versöhnungsfonds" [The Question of Former Forced Laborers under the National Socialist Regime on the Territory of the Present-day Republic of Austria – The Road to the Establishment of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund.] Doctoral Thesis from Political Science for Law Students, University of Salzburg, 2002)



swords, everybody finally agreed with Chancellor Figl, who recommended: "We must say that we are bogged down in budget discussions at the moment..."

It has already been explained that this did not forever close the door to further payments by the Republic to Nazi victims. Neither did the end come with a letter from Nahum Goldman dated December 19, 1961, to Josef Klaus, Austrian Minister of Finance at the time, saying that the Committee for Jewish Claims on Austria "would not take any steps against the Austrian government to demand further legislative measures in favor of Jewish victims of Nazi persecution in Austria." Nahum Goldman was the founding president of this Committee, the first executive director being Saul Kagan, who still runs the Jewish Claims Committee from an office on 26th Street in New York, and who since then has been involved in all important negotiations concerning restitution and compensation. Although he never criticizes Austria, he sighs when he recalls the long road toward creating awareness.

Vranitzky, Klestil and Schüssel: Clear Words

Speeches by Chancellor Franz Vranitzky and President Thomas Klestil were important milestones along this road. Addressing the Austrian Parliament on July 8, 1991, Vranitzky said that Austria had to own up to the dark side of its history, "to shared responsibility for the suffering that was brought over other human beings and peoples, if not by Austria as a state, by citizens of this country." Vranitzky was even more specific on a visit to Israel in a speech made in Jerusalem on June 9, 1993: "We acknowledge all the facts of our history and the deeds of all parts of our population, the good as well as the bad. Just as we claim credit for our good deeds, we must beg forgiveness for the evil ones." And he named the victims by name: "Jews, gypsies, the physically and mentally handicapped, homosexuals, members of minorities, those who were persecuted for political and religious reasons." Vranitzky also admitted, "that there were still huge gaps in the area of material compensation."

On November 15, 1994, President Klestil addressed the Israeli Knesset: "We know that we have too often spoken of the fact that Austria was the first state to lose its freedom and independence to National Socialism—but we have spoken far too rarely of the fact that some of the worst henchmen of the NS dictatorship were in fact Austrians. And no word of apology can ever expunge the agony of the Holocaust. In the name of the Republic of Austria, I bow my head before the victims of that time." And the president also recalled an emotional aspect of the problem: "The truth is complicated, because the front line between perpetrators and victims at that time ran right through the middle of the people, through families and sometimes even through one and the same heart." This was the "soil in which this suppression developed and which delayed a critical analysis of the past ..."

On April 28, 2000, at the cabinet meeting commemorating the anniversary of the re-establishment of the Republic of Austria proclaimed in 1945, Wolfgang Schüssel, Austrian Chancellor since February 2000, remembered all "victims of the war and Nazi terror" explicitly listing the murdered Jews, Sinti, Roma, homosexuals, the mentally handicapped as



Chancellor Franz Vranitzky on his state visit to Israel on June 9, 1993: acknowledging both the achievements and evil deeds in Austrian history.

Source: APA Images/Hans Klaus Techt



President Thomas Klestil addressing the Israeli Knesset on November 15, 1994.

Source: APA Images/Hans Klaus Techt

well as those who had been persecuted for political and religious reasons. In an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* published on November 10, 2000, Schüssel once again, in a correct interpretation of international law, referred to the victim status of the "sovereign state of Austria" in March 1938, but quickly added: "That in no way reduces Austria's moral responsibility." This was supposed to make clear the different roles played by Austrians during the Nazi period for once and for all, as well as Nazi Germany's violent ending of the Republic's ability to act.

Nexus of Guilt through Generations

Such words broke the barrier of distrust and distress that had in the past separated many Austrian and foreign critics from Austria's previous self-image, all the more so as the words were followed by deeds—such as the establishment of the National Fund mentioned earlier. Perhaps of even more importance was the fact that greater efforts were made to critically confront the whole issue of "National Socialism in Austria" in political speeches and in the media, at schools and in adult education, notwithstanding the controversy this sometimes aroused. These efforts also included showing greater sensitivity in the use of everyday language. From the outset there was unanimous agreement that there is no such thing as collective guilt, that the deeds of individuals or even those of many cannot make an entire people guilty, and that consequently no consciousness of collective guilt can be demanded. However, there was also an increasing understanding that this could not mean that the deeds of the fathers had nothing to do with the sons and grandchildren. Guilt is based on an act



Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel with the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Franz König (+ 2004), a bridge-builder between all political fronts and generations.

Source: Hopi-Media

carried out of one's own volition against one's own conscience (subjective guilt) and/or against universally valid moral law (objective guilt). At a matinee at the Vienna State Opera in 1988 to commemorate the tragic events of 1938, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Franz König declared: "Guilt is something that concerns the core of each person's being. Every individual stands before their own conscience and before their own personal judge. However, there is such a thing as an interlinkage of guilt. Recognizing this also entails an obligation to solidarity and contrition—not only with nice words, but also in the form of solidarity expressed in willingness to make recompense."

The historian Gerald Stourzh spoke of the need to acknowledge the wrongdoing of those who went before us, and of a nexus of guilt that linked the generations. Chancellor Franz Vranitzky acknowledged the obligation of a "collective responsibility not to forget." Others contrasted the concept of collective guilt with the idea of "collective shame" and this was no mere conservative attempt at extenuation in a new guise, although the remarks



in the book *Geschichte und Verantwortung* [History and Responsibility] (1988) do deserve some thought.

Individual "shame," wrote the editors Aurelius Freytag, Boris Marte and Thomas Stern in their preface (p. 22), "honors the one who feels it and minimizes the occasion for it to an unutterable Nothing. However, the little word 'collective' placed in front of the word shame, becomes a concealing icon." That might certainly be true of the cunning inventors of repression strategies of the kind described and condemned by psychiatrist Erwin Ringel in his masterpiece *Die österreichische Seele* [The Austrian Soul] (1984). Time and time again, the pens of those who write history have been guided by whitewashing, embellishment and a denial of reality. However, it is seriously open to doubt whether Austria is the only country in which this was the case. Ringel (p. 84) was absolutely right: "Each nation must examine its past, because each nation has incurred guilt." Put more precisely, it should read "because people from every nation have incurred guilt thus burdening the entire population."

In this light, a sense of collective shame means: "I am deeply ashamed that that which occurred between 1938 and 1945 and in which many of my fellow citizens actively took part could occur in my educated and enlightened people: acts of dire barbarism and inexcusable inhumanity. It is my responsibility and my children's responsibility and not just my fathers' and grandfathers' to do all that is humanly possible to ensure that something like that can never happen again here! It is impossible to "make good" what happened with actions designed to make compensation—it is arrogant to even want to try. But actions can and must be taken that express respect for those who were abused and their inviolable human dignity." This takes us directly to the next section of this account: to those who were forced to perform degrading labour for foreign masters that often ended in death and at whose hands they also frequently suffered humiliation and scorn.



›Racism and Exploitation‹

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One Million Forced Laborers for 1.7 Million Austrians

Without the forced laborers deployed in the German Reich, World War II would have ended as early as 1942 or certainly no later than 1943. In the fall of 1944, there were almost one million foreign forced laborers working in the Alpen und Donau Reichsgaue (essentially the territory of present-day Austria) compared to 1.7 million "free" native laborers: more than one-third of the labor force consisted of forced laborers! The National Socialist policy of forced labor thus brought untold suffering upon both those individuals who were directly affected, and the population as a whole by prolonging the criminal war.

Of course, this figure is imprecise because there were also "domestic" forced laborers, although these were vastly outnumbered by those of other nationalities. The forced laborers exploited by the National Socialist regime on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria basically fall into seven categories. They are listed below according to their numerical strength:

1. According to Nazi statistics, there were approximately 580,000 civilian forced laborers working in Austria in the fall of 1944. They came from the Soviet Union (now the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus, etc.), Slovakia and the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy.
2. The second-largest group was prisoners of war. At the end of 1944, there were 182,000 being held in Austria, and many were compelled to perform forced labor.
3. The third-largest group in late 1944 was the approximately 65,000 Hungarian Jews, 15,000 of whom were forced to carry out forced labor in Vienna and Lower Austria following the occupation of their country by Nazi Germany in March 1944. From the fall of 1944 onward, a further 50,000 were deployed to construct a South Eastern Defensive Wall in Austria (that could never have been used). Thousands died in the labor camps or on death marches to concentration camps.

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4. The fourth-largest group of forced laborers on Austrian territory in the same period was the approximately 64,000 inmates of concentration camps located in what is now the Republic of Austria.
 5. Austrian Jews were statistically the next-largest group. They initially had to clean streets after spontaneous recruitment drives, but from late summer 1938 onward were systematically conscripted for forced labor in work gangs. This fate befell some 20,000 individuals, a good 4,000 of whom were still alive in the fall of 1944.
 6. They were followed by the Austrian Roma and Sinti. Already verbally stigmatized as "gypsies," several thousand of them were also forced to carry out forced labor. In the fall of 1944, some 150,000 were still alive. Like the Jews, they were subjected to systematic humiliation and subsequently extermination.
 7. Smaller segments of the population of primarily Austrian extraction who were subject to Nazi persecution also had to perform forced labor in the broadest sense. These included political opponents and other people who were categorized as politically unreliable, religious and ethnic minorities, homosexuals and individuals accused of Rassenschande, Wehrmacht deserters, people living underground in Austria and victims of barbaric medical experiments. The tale of their suffering is told in chapter 9.

The First Victims Were Austrians

When people in Austria try to remember their first encounters with forced laborers, they perhaps recall the prisoners of war from Poland who came to the country at the end of 1939. However, reality was different. Even before this date, Jews living in Vienna (and to a lesser extent other towns) had been subjected to unprecedented humiliation when they were forced to clean the streets of the slogans with which the corporatist Schuschnigg regime had advertised its planned referendum in favor of an independent Austrian state. The crowds of jeering Austrians who derided, taunted



and mocked the Jews as they crawled around on the ground with their buckets and brushes (in many cases with nothing more than toothbrushes) remains a lasting shameful monument to a tradition of vulgar anti-Semitism. That was forced labor not for economic, but for racist reasons, the intention of which was to draw spectacular attention to the inferiority of these people.

Today it is assumed that 137,000 Jews were able to leave Austria either legally or illegally before the Nazi authorities sealed the borders. Some 65,000 Austrian Jews of both sexes were murdered. When the war ended in 1945, there were barely more than 4,000 Jews living in Vienna, including those of mixed race or partners in mixed marriages. Wolf Gruner is just one author who provides an account of these events in his book *Zwangsarbeit und Verfolgung* [Forced Labor and Persecution], published in 2000.

Jews who had lost their jobs as a result of legislation excluding them from employment were forced to carry out earth-moving work. The deployment of Jews in special work gangs organized by the labor offices together with the Gestapo was extended in 1940 from unemployed Jews to include all able-bodied Jews, and became the model for the forced deployment of German Jews both in Germany itself and in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Some 20,000, mainly male Jews, were employed in waste disposal in Vienna, on road, canal and dam construction projects in Kaprun, Carinthia and Styria, and in the fall and winter in harvesting, timber cutting and snow clearing. From 1941 onward, an increasing number of Jews (and from 1942 onward basically all Jews) were deported to Eastern Europe, mostly to Poland, in order to make Germany "judenrein" (literally cleansed of Jews). In the General Government, Jews of both sexes had already been conscripted for forced labor since 1939, with Jewish Councils being made to organize the work on behalf of the German authorities. Initially, the Jews were increasingly concentrated in ghettos, where they received only starvation rations. When deportation to extermination camps began in 1942, jobs in a ghetto offered a last desperate chance of survival.

Between 1939 and 1945, a total of 20,000 Austrian Jews were coerced into this "labor service." They were detained in 65 labor camps (separate from the concentration camp system), of which 30 were located on territory



that is now part of Austria again; 18 such camps were built for Jews from Austria in Germany, 17 Umschulungslager (re-training camps) fulfilled similar purposes. On July 19, 1942, the Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler ordered the clearance of all ghettos and the murder of all Jews by the end of the year. Only those performing "indispensable" labor in the armaments industry were to be spared for the time being. In the spring of 1944, the possibility of using Jews to construct underground factories and "miracle weapons" was raised for the first time.

No Pity for the "Gypsies"

For many years, little attention was given to another group who from the very beginning had been targeted by the Nazis for disciplinary action and then extermination. Disparaged in the past as "gypsies," these people are now, in accordance with their own wishes, referred to as Roma and Sinti, a term that recognizes more precisely their heterogeneous grouping. As early as March 1938, they were singled out as "racially inferior," "work shy" and "asocial" elements. They were forbidden to make music and from May 1938 onward, their children were no longer allowed to attend school. The first deportations to concentration camps took place in June, and in July forced labor was imposed on all able-bodied Roma in Burgenland (where some 9,000 of them lived). One year later, the Burgenland "gypsies" were sent to concentration camps because they were needed to build up SS-owned industries. Each wave of arrests left behind family members and above all children who now had no means of support, and local councils frequently refused to provide welfare benefits for these people even though they were legally entitled to them.

Finally, forced-labor camps were erected for Roma (gypsy camps) in Vienna, Styria (Leoben, Graz, Kobenz, Triebendorf, Unzmarkt, Zeltweg, St. Georgen ob Judenburg and St. Lambrecht bei Neumarkt), in Upper Austria (Weyer), the city of Salzburg (Maxglan) and in Lower Austria (Hinterberg, Preg, Karlhof in Kammern, Fischamend and Gross-Globnitz). The largest gypsy camp, however, was opened in November 1940 at a former manor house in Lackenbach in Burgenland. This camp was under the jurisdic-

tion of the Viennese police, as they dealt with the petty crimes ascribed to the "gypsies." For a long period of time, there were between 200 and 900 people incarcerated there, one third of whom were children. However, in November 1941, this figure soared to a record 2,335 inmates. Shortly afterwards, 2,000 of them and a further 3,000 people from Southern Burgenland and Styria were deported to the ghetto in Łódz and from there to the extermination camp Chelmno/Kulmhof, where they were gassed. The food and housing at the gypsy camp in Lackenbach were atrocious. Nevertheless, the inmates were forced to work in forestry operations, on farms and estates or building roads. The camp authorities took a large portion of their wages, and minor violations of camp rules were subject to draconian punishments. In addition to large numbers of inmates, the camp commander also fell victim to a typhoid epidemic that broke out in the fall of 1941. Only 300 to 400 people survived the horror of Lackenbach.

The smaller groups of Austrian forced laborers defined in the seventh category of victims will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 9. However,

1	Herkunftsland	ehemals Polen
2	Geburtsdag	15. April 1894
3	Geburtsort	Wielikow
	Kreis	Łódź
4	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	Staatslos
	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	-
5	a) Familienstand led., verh., verw., gesch.	verh.
	b) Anzahl der minder- jährigen Kinder	-

The workbook of a former forced laborer from Eastern Europe. Advanced age saved one from the toils.

Source: Paul Rachler



in popular perception, laborers from Eastern and South East Europe, prisoners of war and civilians were by far the largest group of "foreign workers," and indeed this is borne out by the actual statistics. Initially, racial motives were the decisive factor behind the deployment of forced labor. However, with the passing of time, economic motives also came to play an increasingly important role and in the final period of the Nazi regime, it was a mixture of the two that prevailed. This increasing mixture of motives is best illustrated by concentration camp prisoners. During the early years of the war, their deployment was regarded as being of negligible importance for the war economy, but as vital in the final stages.

A Dutchman or Norwegian was coerced into work for economic reasons despite their "Germanic blood," a Jew or a "gypsy" irrespective of their nationality because they were regarded as inferior. In the case of Poles and Ukrainians, both criteria applied. The fact that the German war economy was dependent on foreign forced laborers as early as 1942 and that after 1943/44 at the latest it would have been impossible to continue the war without them was later cynically held against forced laborers returning home by the Soviet communist leadership, in accordance with the idea "You contributed to prolonging the war and thus the sacrifices of our country. You must therefore be treated as enemies of the people!"

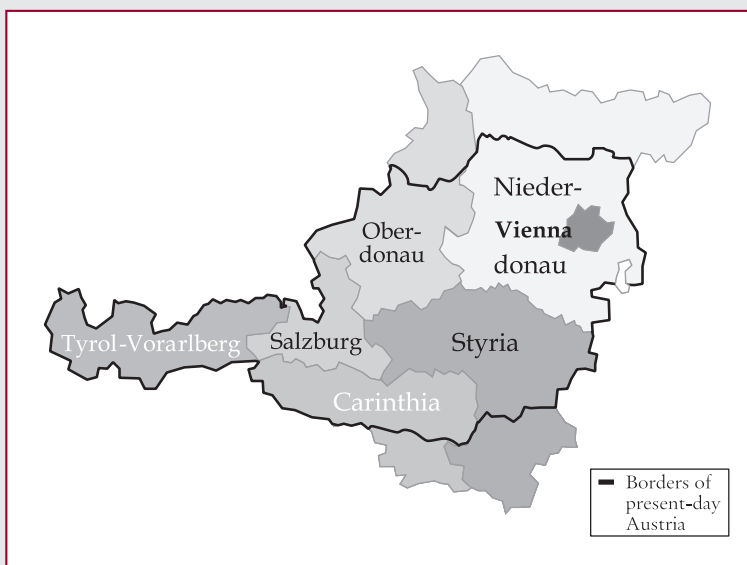
The Unusual Economic Situation in Austria

The Nazi regime had made no plans or preparations for the deployment of forced laborers to support the war economy before Hitler unleashed World War II in 1939. The purpose of the first concentration camps was to render the inmates harmless as political opponents, to break their resistance (by all means using forced labor), to "re-educate" them and subsequently to kill them—but these camps were not designed to systematically exploit their labor for the economy. However, when as a result of the war hundreds of thousands and later millions of workers were tied up at the front, new economic pressures came to bear. The situation in Austria was also unusual inasmuch as the integration of the Austrian economy (that was still suffering from the after-effects of the world economic crisis) with

The Ostmark and Alpen-Donau Reichsgaue

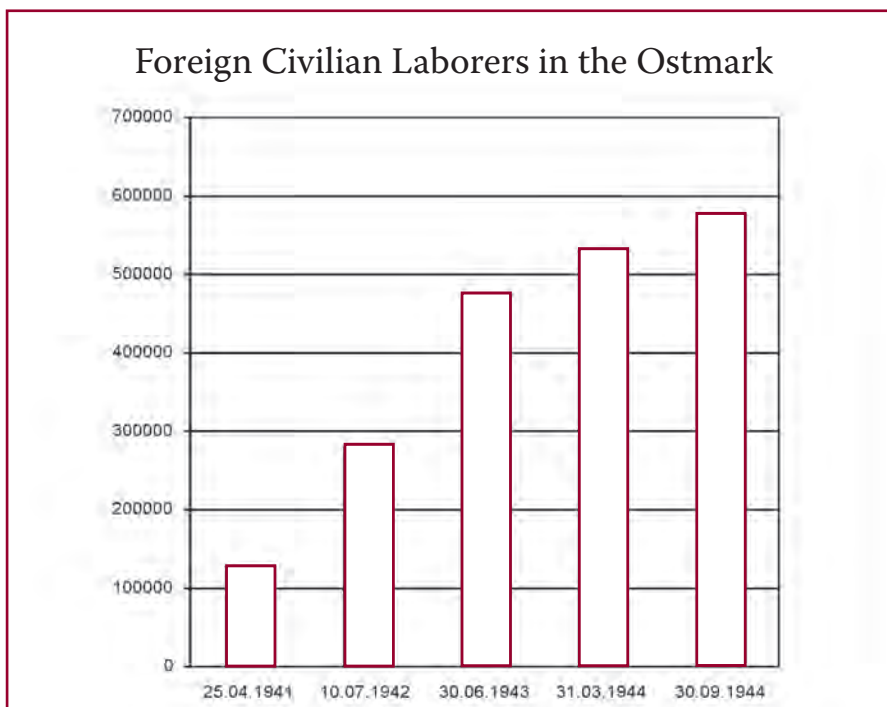
The borders of the Reichsgaue of the German Reich were not identical with those of today's Austrian provinces. The name "Austria" was replaced in March 1938 by the term "Ostmark," and in 1942, at Hitler's order, by the designation Alpen- und Donau-Reichsgaue. Even the borders of the Reichsgaue that replaced the provinces were redrawn. Vienna was enlarged when 98 Lower Austrian municipalities were incorporated into the city, Burgenland was divided up between Niederdonau and Styria. East Tyrol was allocated to Carinthia, two small areas of Tyrol and Vorarlberg were given to Bavaria. Ober-

donau (previously and now Upper Austria) was enlarged by the Styrian court district of Bad Aussee, the administrative district of Gröbming and by the incorporation of municipalities around Steyr at the expense of Lower Austria. Southern Bohemian's borderlands were allocated to Oberdonau, areas in Southern Moravia to Niederdonau. After the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941, Lower Styria (previously part of Yugoslavia), Carniola and Lower Carinthia were united with Carinthia although never completely integrated. All these changes were reversed in 1945.



NSDAP Gau boundaries on the territory of present-day Austria.

Source: German School Atlas 1942



Foreign civilian laborers in the "Ostmark." Between April 1941 and September 1944, the number of forced laborers rose from over 100,000 to almost 600,000.

Source: Florian Freund / Bertrand Perz: Die Zahlenentwicklung der ausländischen Zwangsarbeiter und Zwangsarbeiterinnen auf dem Gebiet der Republik Österreich 1939 - 1945

that of the "Old Reich" (that was already booming due to arms production) had initially exhausted the huge reservoir of unemployed Austrians. Many of those who in March 1938 had hailed the annexation of Austria by the German Reich were recruited from this army of unemployed. They were hoping Hitler would give them work. There was no talk of Auschwitz in those days. In 1938, the number of registered job seekers fell from an annual average of 464,000 in 1937 to 276,000 and in 1939 to only 66,000. Historians Florian Freund and Bertrand Perz have studied this and all other important aspects of the deployment of forced labor in Austria in detail. It is their essay in the book *Die politische Ökonomie des Holocaust* (Volume 7 of the *Querschnitte* series, 2001) that formed the main source for the present chapter of this book. The aforementioned trend was also reflected in economic statistics; as was the case elsewhere in the German Reich, the size of the workforce in Austria (although not the number of those employed in Austrian industry) declined, as increasing numbers of men



were conscripted into the Wehrmacht. The reason for this was that the authorities did not wish to hinder the development of Austrian industry now that they just started pushing forward with its expansion. Nevertheless, the foundations for the forced recruitment of laborers were also laid in the Ostmark (as Austria was called between March 1938 and 1942, when the official designation Alpen- und Donau-Reichsgaue was introduced). By winter 1939/40, there was already a perceptible demand for labor. This was especially true in the agricultural sector, which suffered both from conscription into the Wehrmacht and the movement of labor to trade and industry. The Viennese political scientist Emmerich Tálos examined these issues in the volume *Geschichte und Verantwortung* [History and Responsibility], published in 1988. In 1938, a workbook was introduced for the Ostmark (which more than fifty years later would play an important role in helping track down and identify former forced laborers). A national labor service for all Reich citizens was also introduced in 1938 and significantly reduced individual freedom of movement. With the onset of the war, it also became more difficult for workers to change their jobs of their own volition, but easier to do so when the regime desired it. Working hours were extended, National Labor Service (RAD) was also made compulsory for women, and one-man companies and small businesses were forced to voluntarily streamline their operations or close down.

At Least 23,000 Prisoners of War Died in Austria

Immediately after the outbreak of war, some 300,000 Polish prisoners of war were drafted into work in agricultural operations in the German Reich. (The Geneva Convention permits prisoners of war to be put to work under certain circumstances, which is why this group was excluded from the scheme to compensate former forced laborers negotiated in 2000.) In Austria, the first prisoners of war from the Polish campaign were put to work at the end of 1939. In February 1940, there were some 11,000 POWs employed mainly in the agricultural sector and in construction. In May 1940, there were fewer than 4,000, in December over 87,000. These fluctuations are attributable to the re-designation of prisoners of war as civilian workers, who had fewer rights than prisoners of war. However, after the



campaign in Western Europe, thousands of French and Belgian prisoners of war were brought into the country. Following the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941 by the German Wehrmacht, prisoners of war from Serbia were also forced to work in Austria. In September 1941, they already numbered 28,000 and were the second-largest group after the French, who numbered 103,000. After Hitler's attack on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the number of Soviet prisoners soared; the figure of 24,000 registered in February 1942 did not include the thousands who had immediately been dispatched to Mauthausen concentration camp. At the end of 1940, more than 51 percent of all prisoners of war in Austria were detailed to perform construction work (the figure for the German Reich as a whole was 23 percent), at the end of April the figure was still 43 percent (in the Reich as a whole 21 percent). These figures also reflect the belated development of Austrian infrastructure, basic industry and the armaments industry. With time, the percentage employed in the construction industry fell to below 20 percent, while the percentage of prisoners of war assigned to agriculture rose to 54 percent by the middle of 1942. As long as the German leadership was convinced that after its successful blitzkrieg against Poland and France it would also be able to rapidly defeat and plunder the resources of the Soviet Union, no consideration was given to the forced employment of workers from the Soviet Union. Up to the end of 1941, some 60 percent of the 3,350,000 Soviet prisoners of war were allowed to die—a far more welcome "solution" according to Nazi ideology. It was only after the defeat outside Moscow that the regime began to resign itself to a lengthy Eastern campaign, and the sort of massive draft of Russians into the German economy witnessed after 1942. Due to their poor health, most Soviet prisoners of war could only be employed in agriculture where they were supposed to regain their strength.

IMI: Former Soldiers from Italy

By the middle of 1944, the total number of people detained in prisoner of war camps in Austria had risen to over 208,000, of whom 169,000 were assigned to forced labor. An unexpected turn of events in the war had brought about a political upheaval in Italy, when the Fascist grand council



deposed Benito Mussolini on July 25, 1943, and Pietro Badoglio, who had commanded the Italian forces in the war of aggression against Abyssinia in 1935, formed a new government that abandoned the alliance with Germany in favor of the Allies. The 600,000 Italian troops in the hands of the German Wehrmacht at this point were hence regarded as "traitors to the joint cause" and assigned the status of "military internees" by Germany in order to deprive them of the protection accorded to prisoners of war by the 1929 Geneva Convention.

Unless they declared their willingness to continue fighting voluntarily with Nazi Germany (as only one in ten did), they were deported to the Reich and deployed as forced laborers ("Badoglio-pigs"). The approximately 44,000 "Italian Military Internees" (IMI) who ended up on Austrian territory were not included in the compensation scheme for forced laborers in 2000 because, notwithstanding German manipulations of terminology, they were clearly prisoners of war. In mid 1944, they were the second-largest group after the French (approximately 80,000), followed by the approximately 38,000 Soviet and 19,000 Yugoslav prisoners of war. Towards the end of 1944, the number of Italians fell to around 7,400 because most of them had been re-categorized as civilian forced laborers.

According to Freund and Perz, recent research shows that at least 23,000 prisoners of war perished in prisoner of war camps in Austria, 96 percent of them citizens of the Soviet Union—and this figure does not include the soldier victims of the Mauthausen concentration camp system (a further 10,000) and those prisoners of war (the number of which cannot be ascertained) who did not survive the evacuation marches in the final weeks of the war.

First Civilian Workers Also from Poland

As soon as the war against Poland had ended, the German occupation authorities began recruiting civilian workers for employment in the Reich. Initially this was the continuation of a traditional practice. Polish seasonal workers who came to work in the agricultural sector in the German bor-



derlands were nothing new. Of course, this soon became forced recruitment, and it was not long before veritable manhunts were organized. One man who escaped deportation by carrying out forced labor at a quarry and then as a boiler cleaner at a chemicals factory was Karol Wojtyla, later to become Archbishop of Krakow and Pope John Paul II in Rome. In May 1940, there were already one million Polish men and women working in the German Reich. While in 1939 foreign laborers accounted for just over one percent of the total workforce employed in the German armaments industry, by 1942 this figure had risen to almost 18 percent and by May 1944 to more than 22 percent. In terms of the war economy as a whole, they actually accounted for 26.5 percent of the workforce. In addition to Freund and Perz, Ulrich Herbert from the Historic Seminar at the University of Freiberg has also provided an account of this development in the volume *Die politische Ökonomie des Holocaust* [The Political Economy of the Holocaust]. The work of these three historians formed the basis of the findings of the Austrian Historians' Commission. Soon, however, the number of foreigners who had been "voluntarily" recruited no longer sufficed to meet demand. From the very outset "recruitment" had proved problematic. The historian Mark Spoerer (*Zwangsarbeit im Dritten Reich und Entschädigung* [Forced Labor in the Third Reich and Compensation] *Hohenheimer Protokolle*, Volume 56) defines four major types of recruitment drives:

- » genuine recruitment,
- » the exercise of economic pressure ("only in Germany will you stand a chance of survival"),
- » conscription with the support of local administrative authorities, and finally,
- » deportation with the use of outright force: Anybody who after raids on public squares, streets and in buildings was unable to produce proof of employment was taken to the next collection point and then transported to Germany in closed freight cars.

In their exhaustive account *Zwangsarbeit in der Land- und Forstwirtschaft auf dem Gebiet Österreichs 1939–1945* [Forced Labor in Agriculture and



Forestry on Austrian Territory 1939–1945] published in 2004, historians Stefan Karner and Peter Ruggenthaler explained that at least half of all deportations of so-called Eastern workers involved these individuals being seized from their homes or literally rounded up in public raids. According to the victims, these acts of violence were frequently carried out by their "own people," in other words people from their own villages who had been hired as collaborators, a further 40 percent by uniformed Germans. Only three percent of those deported had really gone voluntarily in response to direct recruitment.

Systematic Humiliation of the "Sub-Humans"

According to the racist ideology of the Nazi regime, even the deployment of the Poles entailed "national-political dangers" that were subsequently considerably exacerbated by the deployment of the "Russians," who many people regarded as even more racially inferior. A dangerous "mixing of blood" and opinions therefore had to be prevented. For that reason, Poles throughout the Reich were—whenever possible—housed in barracks (although this frequently proved impossible in the countryside), received lower wages than German workers, had to work longer hours than their German counterparts and were required to wear a "P" badge on their clothing. They were generally forbidden to use express trains, public facilities or even attend church services. At least half the Polish civilian workers had to be women in order to "protect German blood." Sexual relations between Poles and Germans were punished by the execution of the Polish partner. Following the defeat of France and invasion of other countries in North West and Northern Europe, forced laborers were treated according to a racial hierarchy. Peter Ruggenthaler describes this system as follows in his master's thesis for the Institute of History at the University of Graz published in 2000, *Ein Geschenk für den Führer* [A Gift for the Führer]:

- » "Western workers of Germanic descent" such as Flemings and Dutch, and subsequently Danes and Norwegians, fared best with regard to wages and working conditions.



In 1942, Fritz Sauckel, Gauleiter of Thuringia, was appointed General Plenipotentiary for the Employment of Labor..

Source: Propaganda book "Europa – arbeitet in Deutschland"/Zentralverlag der NSDAP 1943

» They were followed by "Western workers of non-Germanic descent," a term that essentially referred to the French.

» Foreign workers from states allied to Nazi Germany, Spaniards, Italians (who until the Badoglio coup in 1943 were even categorized as "guest workers"), but also Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Moldovans, Slovenes, Croatians, Czechs, Bulgarians and Macedonians occupied an intermediate position before even more despised groups.

» The Poles and all Eastern Slavs from the Soviet Union and its

neighboring states were mercilessly regarded as "sub-humans." These civilian "Eastern workers" deployed in the Reich (of whom there were between two and a half and three million during the war) were also branded by the badges they were forced to wear on their clothes ("P" for Poles, otherwise "Ost" for East).

» The lowest position on this degrading scale of National Socialist values was occupied by the Jews and "asocials" such as Roma and Sinti.

Once the Nazi leadership had abandoned its belief in a blitzkrieg success on all fronts, it became clear that the need for agricultural laborers remained undiminished while demand from industry was increasing rapidly. Consequently even more foreign workers had to be exploited. To quote Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring: "Skilled German workers belong in the armaments industry; shoveling and breaking rocks is not their job, that's what the Russians are for." In March 1942, Fritz Sauckel, the gauleiter of Thuringia and a Nazi of the first hour, was appointed General

Eigruber's and Himmler's Brothel Worries "Alien Infants' Homes" for an "Unsavory Problem"

"I have thousands of foreign women in Oberdonau and have now ascertained that these foreign workers ... get pregnant and have children." August Eigruber, the gauleiter of Linz, reported what to him was apparently an astonishing fact to Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler in a letter dated July 15, 1942. Himmler had apparently never given this problem much thought either, because the answer was a long time coming. However, to a certain extent the Führer's favorite city had already carried out pioneering work in the area of sexual policy. In 1940, a brothel was opened in Linz for foreign forced laborers. In response to complaints from leading National Socialists, Himmler attempted to defend this step, explaining "if I don't set up these brothels these millions of foreigners will attack German women and girls ... We have to try and solve this unsavory problem somehow."

Nevertheless, the "unsavory problem" continued to grow as increasing numbers of Wehrmacht soldiers failed to return home from the war. In 1943, the regime started urging, and increasingly frequently ordering, women to have abortions. "alien infants' homes" were established (Gabriella Hauch has documented twelve

in what is now Upper Austria) and the mortality rate there was unusually high. However, if local women became pregnant by foreign forced laborers (or even Jewish men), "then the mother received absolutely no support whatsoever from the National Socialist welfare organization (NSV) or the state welfare office and no ration cards (for food and clothing) for their child," according to the brochure *Erlebnisse ausländischer Zwangsarbeiter in der deutschen Kriegsindustrie* [Experiences of Foreign Forced Laborers in the German War Economy] published by Salzkammergut-Druckerei Gmunden, 1945.

Children who were the result of forbidden relationships also suffered badly and were separated from their mothers. Some were hidden by relatives, friends, families living practical Christianity, in monasteries and convents or in barns. Jewish children were exposed to particular danger. In addition to fear, self-doubt and feelings of inferiority, many of them later also suffered from neuroses. The German weekly magazine *Die Zeit* devoted a lengthy article to these "Child Survivors" published on August 2, 2001.

Plenipotentiary for the Employment of Labor. He set to work with zeal and in his own words "of the five million foreign workers who have come to Germany, not even 200,000 came voluntarily." Sauckel was sentenced to death by the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal in 1946 and hanged. Prior to that, however, Hitler, was very satisfied with him.

Hundreds and Thousands from the Soviet Union

At around the same time, the floodgates were opened for forced labor by Red Army prisoners of war and civilians from the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. Like the "Poland Edicts," the "Eastern Worker Edicts" issued in spring 1942 provided for a considerably more racist treatment of these people. They were forced to wear the "East" badge on their clothing, live in guarded barracks whenever possible and were left to the mercy

The image shows a child's workbook with a portrait of a young boy and a table of personal information. The portrait is stamped with a circular seal containing a swastika and the text 'REICHSGEMEINSCHAFT DER DEUTSCHEN VÖLKER' and '14. 11. 42'. Below the portrait is a circular stamp with '14. 11. 42' and '10. 1. 43'. The text 'ARBEITSBUCH FÜR AUSLÄNDER' is visible in the background.

1	Herkunftsland	besetzte Ostgebiete
2	Geburtsdag	1932
3	Geburtsort	Inepropetrowsk 8. JUNI 1944
	Kreis	Pellawa
4	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	unbekannt (Ostländer)
	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	
5	a) Familienstand led. verh. verw. gesch.	led.
	b) Anzahl der minderjährigen Kinder	

The workbook of a child from Eastern Europe coerced into humiliating forced labor.

Source: Paul Rachler



of the plant guards and the Gestapo. An estimated 30,000 or more such camps were set up in most of the Reich's cities and in the countryside. Living conditions in the individual camps varied greatly. However, by summer 1942, large numbers of companies were complaining that the deployment of Russians was completely uneconomical. Undernourished individuals living in inhumane conditions are simply not capable of working well. Although Polish workers theoretically received the same wages as their German counterparts, they had to pay a 15 percent "Polish tax" as compensation for the fact that they were exempt from military service and were "permitted to participate in Germany's higher level of civilization." Workers from the Soviet Union automatically received wages that were 40 percent lower than those of German workers (and in practice often received nothing at all).

The distribution of competences between the various top levels of the Nazi hierarchy functioned with German efficiency. The department of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Central Security Office) for foreigners in Berlin was responsible for ensuring that "racial purity" was maintained while armaments minister Albert Speer was interested in ensuring the deployment of as many workers as possible with maximum efficiency. Fritz Sauckel walked a tightrope between them as a political mediator, although as the chances of victory declined, the advocates of the armaments industry carried more weight. Forced laborers were easier to manage, enjoyed less protection under industrial safety laws and could not defend themselves against harassment. They became increasingly important for German industry.

The number of civilian foreign laborers on Austrian territory rose from 128,000 in April 1941 to 580,000 in September 1944. Forced laborers from the Soviet Union (almost one third) soon outnumbered those from Poland and coerced laborers from Yugoslavia. In 1944, 30 percent of civilian foreign workers were women. The number of Austrian women employed in industry also rose from 150,000 in 1942 to 185,000 in 1944, as the men who were fighting at the front were replaced at the workbench by women. In the same period, the percentage of foreign workers (prisoners of war and civilians) rose from approximately 10 to almost 36 percent or from 86,000 to 260,000. The number of prisoners of war doubled in these two years while the number of civilian foreigners quadrupled.

Thirty Percent of Foreign Laborers Were Women

Due to the differing conditions in Austria and the "Old Reich," the number of those employed in industry in the Reich as a whole remained fairly constant at approximately ten million from 1942 onward, while increasing from 530,000 to more than 730,000 in the territory of present-day Austria. This was a consequence of Austria's need to catch up industrially, the relocation of German companies to Austria (which for a long time was considered to be less vulnerable to air raids) but also of the fact that there was no core workforce here that could have trained and supervised the newly assigned laborers. Towards the end of the war, the ethnic composition of the conscripted workforce also underwent another change. The percentage of Poles and South East Europeans declined while the percentage of Soviet citizens soared from virtually zero to more than 30 percent. The ratio of male to female forced laborers fluctuated only marginally over the years, and the trend in Austria developed similarly to that in the Re-

1	Herkunftland	besetzte Ostgebiete
2	Geburtsort	1930
3	Geburtsort	Koteljwa
	Kreis	Pottawa
4	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	unangehört (Ostarbeiter)
	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	
5	a) Familienstand led., verh., verw., gesch.	led.
	b) Anzahl der minderjährigen Kinder	

The workbook of a former forced laborer from the occupied areas of Eastern Europe.

Source: Paul Rachler

ich as a whole. In 1944, 30 percent of civilian foreign workers in Austria were women. Ulrich Herbert concludes (in *Die politische Ökonomie des Holocaust*, p. 211) that "the employment of foreign forced laborers was not limited to large companies only, but (with the exception of the administration) extended to all areas of the economy—from small farms to metalworking shops with six workers to the railways, municipalities and large armaments factories." At the end of the war, forced laborers in Austria were used above all in Vienna, in Lower Austria and the central region of Upper Austria, in industry (iron, steel, machine-building, the automobile industry), on building sites and for the construction of infrastructure. "The development and operation of new industrial enterprises depended to a large extent on the allocation of sufficient forced laborers." (Freund and Perz, p. 192). Only a small proportion of the handsome profits generated in the armaments industry from the rationalization program implemented by Armaments Minister Albert Speer were distributed, as most were reinvested. That helped build up valuable starting capital for post-war reconstruction inasmuch as it was not destroyed again by bomb-



Armaments Minister Albert Speer and the Gauleiter of Oberdonau August Eigruber "in conversation" with prisoners from Mauthausen concentration camp while inspecting an armaments factory.

Source: Foto archive of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial/Hans Hubmann

ing or other war damage. But no matter how many laborers were recruited or transported in cattle cars from Eastern Europe to Germany, no matter how many prisoners of war were coerced into labor, German industry hungered for more. There was only one institution that had power of control over an additional reservoir of human labor: the SS. This organization now became the last great supplier of labor.

The Human Trade in Concentration Camp Inmates

The SS had been operating business enterprises in the Reich since 1938, mostly quarries, brick factories and workshops of various kinds in which concentration camp inmates were forced to work. Initially this work was regarded as part of efforts to "re-educate" them or as punishment. Such



The notorious "Stairs of Death" at Mauthausen concentration camp. Countless prisoners were forced to haul blocks of stone up these stairs until they collapsed from exhaustion and in many cases died.

Source: Foto archive of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial

enterprises included the German Armaments Works and the German Earth and Stone Works. However, economic motives were already an important factor behind the construction of a concentration camp at Mauthausen in Upper Austria, to which the first prisoners (mainly Austrians) were sent in summer 1938. The nearby quarries owned by the City of Vienna fired the imagination of the Nazi authorities, who were aware of Hitler's ambitious plans for Linz (see also: The Mauthausen Death Camp). According to Ulrich Herbert, the number of inmates in all concentration camps in the Reich in the fall of 1942 totaled more than 100,000, in spring 1943



Concentration camp prisoners carrying out preparatory work for the construction of workshop huts at Mauthausen. Racial humiliation and a desire to exploit labor were the two key motives behind forced labor. Source: Foto archive of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial

more than 200,000, in August 1944 more than 500,000, at the end of 1944 approximately 600,000 and by early 1945 the figure had risen to more than 700,000. While the number of concentration camp prisoners rose, in 1943 the death rates began to fall—the logical result of the fact that in September 1942, Hitler had acceded to the demands of Armaments Minister Speer and ordered the SS to immediately place "its" concentration camp prisoners at the disposal of industry on a "loan" basis. Slave trading by order of the Führer!

Of the 600,000 men and women imprisoned in concentration camps at the end of 1944, 480,000 were registered as "fit to work." According to estimates by the SS, some 240,000 of them were assigned to underground production facilities and construction projects run by the Todt organization, while the other half were employed by private companies. Mark Sporer says that on average, concentration camp prisoners accounted for ten percent of the total workforce in the Reich, but for 40 percent of deaths. According to Ulrich Herbert, of the two and a half million people who



The Mauthausen Death Camp

Roughly Half of the Almost 200,000 Inmates Died

The camp at Mauthausen, which was originally planned as a concentration camp for men, was opened in 1938 in the Upper Austrian district of Perg because of the nearby granite quarries owned by the City of Vienna. The intention from the outset was therefore to systematically exploit the prisoners' labor. In early 1939, inmates of Mauthausen started working in the quarries. In March 1940, a second concentration camp was opened at nearby Gusen, which was to develop into one of the largest concentration camp complexes. Nevertheless, until the end of 1942, the main purpose of the double camp Mauthausen-Gusen, where prisoners deemed to be virtually uneducable (kaum noch erziehbare Schutzhäftlinge) were detained under protective custody orders and were forced to work for Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke GmbH, was the combating and extermination of political and ideological opponents of National Socialism. They were locked up, tortured and in many cases murdered. Working prisoners were also punished, mistreated, shot or hanged for minor offences or even inefficiency. The sick were frequently left to starve or freeze to death, or were killed by lethal injection to the heart or gassed. In view of these particularly severe conditions, this camp was the first concentration camp to be

categorized as one where conditions of maximum cruelty prevailed.

The prisoner mortality rate at Mauthausen was one of the highest in the German concentration camp system: malnourishment, poor housing and the refusal to allow prisoners rest periods were part of an SS strategy based on the assumption that a steady supply of new prisoners would make up for losses. In the course of 1942, calls from certain industrial companies for cheap concentration camp labor became louder. In March, a Mauthausen satellite camp was opened in Steyr-Münichholz with the declared aim of providing workers mainly for the aviation and missile industries. In 1943, work began to transfer production plants underground and shafts were built in the area around Melk on the Danube, at Ebensee and in Gusen. At the end of 1944 some 10,000 prisoners were toiling at Mauthausen, a figure that rises to more than 60,000 if all the satellite camps are included. Altogether, almost 200,000 people from almost all European countries and in some cases even non-European countries were deported to Mauthausen. Half of them were brutally murdered. Today, the former concentration camp is a place of memorial managed by the Austrian Ministry of the



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Interior. Each year it is visited by tens of thousands of visitors both from Austria and abroad, including large numbers of school classes. The liberation of the camp inmates by the US Army in May 1945 is celebrated each year at a large international ceremony on the site of the former concentration camp. The cer-

emony in May 2005 was also attended by the Austrian President Heinz Fischer and Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel. Under the terms of international law, sole responsibility for compensating former inmates of the concentration camp rests with the Federal Republic of Germany.

Concentration camp prisoners in the Mauthausen complex

Prisoners categories	9/15/1944
Clergy	40
§ 175 Homosexuals	69
Jehovah's Witnesses	72
Gypsies	157
Members of the Wehrmacht	50
Asocials	428
"Prisoners held in limited preventative custody"	1,294
Spanish	2,203
"Prisoners held in protective custody"	2,942
Soviet prisoners of war	4,782
Jews (all nationalities)	10,556
Soviet civilian workers	13,155
Political prisoners (all nationalities)	28,800
Total	64,548

Source: Florian Freund / Bertrand Perz: Die Zahlenentwicklung der ausländischen Zwangsarbeiter und Zwangsarbeiterinnen auf dem Gebiet der Republik Österreich 1939–1945, p. 242 ff. [Numerical Development of Foreign Forced Laborers on the Territory of the Republic of Austria 1939–1945]

were sent to concentrations camps or one of the many satellite camps (662 in January 1945), some 15 percent were Germans and 85 percent foreigners. In his doctoral thesis tracing the fates of these individuals, Thomas Herko concludes that "their forced labor deployment was characterized by unimaginable cruelty and a permanent struggle for survival."



The Death Marches of the Hungarian "Exchange Jews"

The Wehrmacht invasion of Hungary in March 1944 enabled the Nazis to gain control of 760,000 Jews. However, one week before their planned deportation to Auschwitz, Hitler demanded a contingent of 100,000 Hungarian Jews for forced labor in the armaments industry and constructing bunkers. In specific terms, that could mean being transferred from one concentration camp to another. The first transport from Auschwitz with 2,000 Hungarian Jews arrived at the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp complex at the end of May 1944. It was followed a short time later by three other transports with 5,500 Jews, most of whom were divided between the satellite camps in Ebensee and Melk.

Another group of at least 15,000 Jews, more than 40 percent of whom were women, were taken directly from Hungary to the camp in Strasshof to the north of Vienna. They were known as "exchange Jews" because their lives had been "spared" in the course of negotiations between Rezső Kasztner and the SS in exchange for a promise of material supplies from the Allies. They were at once assigned to forced labor in industry and the skilled crafts, at construction companies, government offices, municipal enterprises and Wehrmacht facilities as well as clearing the debris of bombed buildings in Vienna and Niederdonau. Shortly before the end of the war, some of the exchange Jews were concentrated in Strasshof again. Most of them probably survived the war, however some 2,500 were sent to Theresienstadt. In the fall of 1944, the Hungarian puppet government installed after the overthrow of Miklós Horthy agreed to "lend" 50,000 of the Jews still living in Budapest to the SS, which put them to work building the South Eastern Defensive Wall along what was then the Hungarian-German border in what are now Lower Austria, Burgenland and Styria. The working and living conditions in the primitive camps were murderous, resulting in mass mortality.

As the Red Army approached the Wall at the end of March 1945, there could no longer be any question of effective resistance on the part of the German Wehrmacht. However, there was sufficient time to evacuate the Jewish camps and drive the surviving inmates toward Mauthausen in Austria. Many residents of the areas concerned experienced episodes of this



death march. Those too exhausted to continue were shot on the spot, it is unlikely that more than 20,000 at most reached Mauthausen or the satellite camp Gunskirchen near Wels. When US troops liberated Gunskirchen a short time later, there were 15,000 men and women living there, more than 1,500 of whom died after liberation.

One Million Forced Laborers in Austria

To sum up, it can be said that the German economy had begun to suffer from a shortage of labor soon after the outbreak of war. Moreover, in Austria, important industrial enterprises had only been founded and expanded after the German invasion. On the other hand, it was initially possible to meet this shortage of labor from the masses of unemployed. However, the longer the war dragged on and the more conscription into the armed forces took valuable workers away from the "home front," the greater the economic pressure became to use foreign laborers. While these were initially recruited voluntarily, ever-increasing degrees of force were subsequently used. When the deployment of Austrian Jews, Roma and Sinti, and foreign prisoners of war no longer sufficed, the Nazi rulers resorted to the inmates of work training camps (AEL), then of concentration camps and the camps of the Hungarian Jews. The maximum number of "foreign workers" employed at any one time in the German Reich was 7.6 million in summer 1944. In view of the enormous fluctuation, however, historians (such as Ulrich Herbert) consider a figure of between nine and a half and ten million to be more realistic. According to Freund and Perz, approximately one million foreign workers were employed on the territory of present-day Austria during the war. By far the largest group amongst them was foreign civilian workers, of whom there were 580,000. In Germany, most foreign workers were put to work in industry at a very early date, while in Austria industrial workers did not outnumber those employed in agriculture so dramatically. To this number, one has to add a total of approximately 250,000 prisoners of war, first of all from Poland, France and Belgium, but later on from Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and—as a special case—those from Italy after the fall of the government.



Wehrmacht soldiers guarded Jews, who like "asocials," all political opponents, members of minorities, homosexuals and the disabled had to carry out forced labor.

Source: APA Images/Ullstein Bild

Half the 200,000 people imprisoned in concentration camps on the territory of present-day Austria perished; working in inhumane conditions was a major contributing factor. If one then includes the approximately 55,000 Hungarian Jews and virtually all Austrian Roma and Sinti as victims of forced labor, one is forced to agree with Ulrich Herbert, who in his article in *Die politische Ökonomie des Holocaust* concluded that, "the deployment of forced labor in the German war economy was no side effect initiated by the regime, but was one of the major prerequisites for the six-year war conducted by Germany," as "no later than winter 1941/42 when the tide of war began to turn, the German economy was dependent on the employment of foreign forced laborers with no alternative." (p. 219)

However, the same author dismisses the occasionally held view that the deployment of foreign forced laborers was restricted to parts of the agricultural sector and a few large armaments plants. "To date it has been impossible to find a single large firm in the production sector that did not use foreign forced labor during the war. This is especially true with regard

Florian Freund: The Nationalities Problem

National Socialist statistics used various designations to identify the different groups of foreign civil workers between 1940 and the end of 1944. Initially prisoners were recorded by nationality, for example Poles, Dutch, Hungarians, Soviet Russians or Yugoslavs. These categorizations were replaced by geographical designations such as former Poland, the General Government, the Netherlands, Hungary, Yugoslavia or Former Soviet

Territory (Eastern Workers). These appellations referred to the borders that had been changed by Nazi Germany and said nothing about whether a person was a member of an ethnic minority within those borders. Nazi statistics therefore provide fairly accurate information with regard to total figures, but are of only very limited value in terms of the current nationality of foreign civilians deployed as forced laborers.

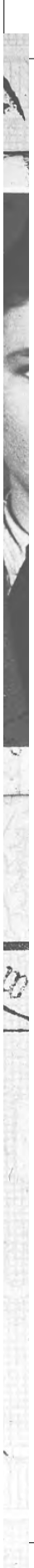
Civilian foreign women in the Ostmark / Donau and Alpenreichsgaue	September 30, 1944
Soviet Russians / Eastern Workers / Former Soviet Territory (Eastern Workers)	178,591
Poles / Former Poland / General Government + Bez.Bialystok	106,023
Protectorate Citizens / Protectorate	61,738
French / France	57,628
Italians / Italy	49,078
Croatia	22,210
Slovaks / Slovakia	13,213
Yugoslavs / Former Yugoslavs / Former Yugoslavia (excluding Croatia)	11,706
Hungarians	10,759
Other	69,694
Total	580,640

Source: Florian Freund / Bertrand Perz: Die Zahlenentwicklung der ausländischen Zwangsarbeiter und Zwangsarbeiterinnen auf dem Gebiet der Republik Österreich 1939 - 1945, p. 242 ff.



to the civilian workers and prisoners of war, whereas the concentration camp inmates and the Jewish forced workers were primarily requested by larger firms. The initiative for the use of forced workers of all categories always derived from the firm; if they did not ask for forced workers, they received none." (p. 219)

This confirms the terrible experience of the extent to which human wrongdoing becomes entrenched, spreading like an epidemic by order and habit, and how it can become a mass instrument of a state policy that holds human rights and human dignity in contempt, and from which almost no one can escape. The National Socialist rulers succeeded in exponentiating a racist ideology with economic demands in a system of double exploitation. Human beings who were despised as "inferior" were first humiliated by forced labor and then deliberately, or as the situation "arose," left to die. Anyone who escaped this fate thanks to strength or skill, compassion or coincidence, prayer or simple good fortune, was a hero or heroine of the human will to live and has a right to at least respect and a well meant gesture.



CHAPTER 4

›Every Case a Tragic Fate‹

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	Volks- gehörigkeit	YS
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	Anzahl er minder- ährigen Kinder	-

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To Have No Home Is Not Good

"To have no home is not good." It was without pathos, without exaggeration and yet without extenuation, that in 1966 Jean Améry soberly summed up what was true for every man, woman and child who during the Nazi domination of much of Europe had been deported from their home countries into the German Reich, in most cases forcibly, and in almost all cases prevented from returning as they chose. Of the ten million people who had this humiliation forced upon them, approximately one million had to perform their labor on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria.

Asked about their memories more than half a century after their ordeal, it was often difficult for survivors to reveal the pain, horror, fear, heartache or sometimes even bitter memories of a relationship that had been etched on their souls. Some of them were unable to talk about their experiences, others were unwilling, many were too sick and too weak, others could not be given an opportunity to talk at length. Many lacked the words to describe their suffering, many lacked trust. Only, and after much careful



A Slovenian family awaiting deportation with their luggage.

Source: D'ÖW



thought, were a small number willing to give lengthy interviews. One of them, Dr. Oledy Petrovich Derid, lives in Chisinau, the capital of the Republic of Moldova, which was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940, but seceded from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991. In a referendum held in 1994, 90 percent of the population voted in favor of continued national independence.

Political power struggles, civil war and a still unresolved dispute over Transnistria, an area in the east of Moldova inhabited mostly by Ukrainians, Tatars and Russians, have bled the country dry economically, politically and spiritually. Today a Moldovan-Romanian nationalism is cultivated, notwithstanding the fact that Russians and Ukrainians account for 52 percent of the total population of Chisinau and 27 percent of the country as a whole. Oledy Petrovich Derid is one of them. In a sixteen-hour interview conducted over three days, and which he was surprisingly able to give in German, Derid told his story to psychologist Karl Fallend. This was the first time in his life that he had ever done so—for nobody had ever wanted to listen to him for so long and so sensitively as his interviewer. Fallend recorded what Derid told him of his experiences in a book. This account is reproduced here in a highly abbreviated form. In objective terms, Derid's narrative is representative of many biographies from this period, however, it is his extraordinary perceptiveness that make his case so remarkable.

"The Whole Square Groaned"

Both of his parents—his mother was Russian and his father Ukrainian—were intellectuals from good social backgrounds. Their son spent a happy childhood in Kharkov, the former Ukrainian capital, where he was born. While at university, Derid's father had met a student of architecture, married her and abandoned his own studies in order to devote himself to his literary passion. He wrote stories and novels, translated classics, was active in the Ukrainian writers' association and, as a dedicated Socialist, worked to advance the development of Ukrainian culture within the Soviet Union until Stalin's destruction of the intelligentsia ruined the future. Derid's father died at the age of 37, and Derid trained to become



an electrician's assistant because the vocational school provided students with a suit, shoes and food. In October 1941, the German Wehrmacht marched in. The day after the invasion, the German field police displayed a man wearing a placard bearing the word "partisan" to the local crowds from the balcony of the Communist Party building. The Germans placed a noose around the man's neck and while he was still screaming "I am innocent," they pushed him to his death. The crowd was stunned. There was also a great deal of hunger. As Derid's mother no longer had a job, he walked to the village where his father had been a landowner. One day, he was picked up by German soldiers and put to work building roads. Later he was taken before a medical commission and sent to the next rail freight station and placed in a cattle car to travel westward. His journey ended at the Hermann-Göring Works in Linz. The steel mill had plenty of use for the 16-year-old electrical fitter, who worked together with others from his country who had fled eastward to escape the Wehrmacht—but not quickly enough and had been overtaken by the army.

Derid remembers that "occasionally women would be searching for their husbands. If they could not find them, they offered to pass off other men as their husbands. In this way, some of them came free. I met a number of these men in our re-training group ... Old Austrian men taught in this school, good masters, and relations with them were very good. Young Austrians also worked there and our teacher was an ethnic German woman from Russia. "After three months, they said, 'you've finished your training now, time to get to work!'" However, Derid was too weak and was only able to collect electrode stubs. Electrical welders received a loaf of bread, a packet of margarine and a bigger piece of sausage as additional rations for heavy labor. Hunger bred envy and Derid resolved, "I want to be an electrical welder too." When he was 17, he became one.

Previously, he had worked twelve hours a day, worked day and night shifts alternate weeks and had a day off on Sunday to relax and do his laundry. Each day, there were two breaks, one lasting 15 minutes and the other 35 to 45 minutes for Germans and foreigners alike. Each morning, a quarter of a kilo of bread was issued—and usually consumed immediately. Now, as an electrical welder, he received the extra rations for heavy labor—but by then there was no more sausage. "So I never saw an Austrian sausage as long as the war lasted." Moreover, although he and all his comrades had



been degraded to "sub-humans," he remained an outsider in the camp and in his hut because of his social background. "Almost all of them were from villages, I came from a family of teachers and architects..." The others played cards for food coupons or a few marks, "I spent a lot of time alone thinking." He still vaguely remembers the camp leader: "I believe he was an Austrian, a good man, without a uniform; he also organized concerts and performances with Russian and German actors."

A Tavern in Linz: "It Was Beautiful"

Derid still knows the word "bread" in at least five languages. He is still tormented by the memory of the thick soup, the bread and the fighting over the last chunks of it. "There simply wasn't enough. The cook was a Czech. He couldn't stand the sight of it anymore and beat people with a stick. I did not fight for the extra rations. And so I was always hungry." And, he says, "the others very often went to taverns in their free time, I only went twice. Twice. I liked it. It was beautiful." Sometimes, his comrades told him, they could order potato salad from the waiter without ration cards. The price was very low. "I never did that." Why not? "I was ashamed to call the waiter, do you understand? I was young, from Russia, had the "East" badge on my chest..."

One day, around the middle of 1943, the foreman gave him three days holiday, four including Sunday. "I had four days holiday in the middle of the war! I went walking through the streets of Linz Kleinmünchen with the pretty little buildings, tiny narrow streets. I spent these four days walking around in silence. That was good, was good, very good!" However, he had no personal contact with Austrians in these few days either. "With the "East" badge, you understand, it is enemy territory ... we are sub-humans, they are the master race. That is why there was no contact. There was one old man at work; he was a very good man. He was the only one who greeted me with the local greeting, Servas! Once he took me into the works canteen, where I had never been before. He brought me a meal, I thanked him so much for that."



Derid hesitated when his comrades decided they wanted to tattoo him one day—they were all tattooed—but finally gave in ("what, don't you want to be one of us?"). "Today, that is a very bad thing," he says. "When I travel by bus, I hide my hand. Only criminals and adolescents have them..." Later, when he was appointed to a university chair and became the scientific secretary to the dean (specialty: metallurgy), the tattoo was doubly embarrassing. But what preoccupies Derid more than all the other memories are the events that took place shortly before his eighteenth birthday in August 1943: his attempted escape and its consequences.

A Vain Attempt at Escape

One evening in May, seven workers, one of them a young girl, set out on an adventure. One of the men had obtained a map, compass, tins of food and patched clothes from local civilians. "We lost our way in a forest. The next day we saw a house in a field. The leader of the group said we should file past it one at a time! I was the first to go, the young woman followed me. We waited for the others in the woods behind the house. They never came. So the two of us walked on, spent the night in trees again." An old woman gave them water to drink from a bucket, a farmer allowed them to spend the night in the stable. At last they reached a railway station. Derid copied the names from a map that had all the station names. When the train arrived, he bought two tickets, "to Loosdorf. Loosdorf!" As they were frightened of being checked upon arrival in Vienna they continued their journey on foot, took a train from Vienna to Drösing near the Slovak border and spent the night in a barn.

"Now we recognized that our escape had been a mistake!" They took a train back to Vienna. "I said to my companion, 'go back to Linz, say you went for a walk in the forest and got lost!' But I went to the Prater in Vienna." Shooting galleries, the Giant Ferris Wheel, games of chance: a day of unsurpassed happiness! That evening, Derid gave himself up to the police clutching a piece of paper that told his fortune. For days he was held in a police detention center, before being transported to a penal camp in Lanzendorf. From here he was taken in handcuffs to the Schörghub work



training camp near Linz, to which a "Committee for Asocials" had already sent an increasing number of "loafers," "individuals who refused to work" and "contract breakers" before the Linz Gestapo took it over in 1942.

"The Work Training Camp Was Hell"

"It was hell," Derid recalls, "sheer hell." The inmates slept in bunk beds without mattresses, without pillows, without blankets. They were woken up at half past four in the morning. "When the door was torn open, everybody ran to it because the last one to arrive was beaten with a long stick." They then had to march to a railway construction site, where they carried track parts, sleepers, with large tongs. When one worker collapsed, a Gestapo man ("most of them were Russians") dragged him to the side of the track by his collar and shot him. Meals also had to be eaten in small huddled groups. "Anyone who moved a few steps to the side was shot." When an old man who had crawled after a boot that had been thrown away found himself looking up into the mouth of a pistol, he begged, "don't shoot! I have three children at home!" But his compatriot pulled the trigger and the blood of the murdered Russian covered the uniform of his killer, who tried to wipe himself clean with a handkerchief: "You damned dog! You crocodile!" On another occasion, an SS man forced the prisoners to file past the remains of the head of a Frenchman who had been shot with an exploding bullet: "There, look at that!"

A stolen jacket was once found in the possession of a French prisoner. The Frenchman went to the camp leader and pointed Derid out as the alleged thief, although Derid knew nothing. "Two steps forward!" Derid was dragged to the dreaded "coffin hut" from where there was rarely any escape. "I thought my final hour had come." If someone was dragged off there, all you heard afterwards were terrible cries, then they all died." He had to choose a coffin. "Open the lid! Pull your trousers down! Lie down next to the coffin!" And then they began to beat him with sticks. Then came the (in this case almost merciful) announcement, "we will beat you like this every day until you confess you stole the jacket!" He could not lie still at night for pain. The next morning, the vegetable gardener said to the



The team of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund and the members of the Committee examined each individual fate in detail.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

SS man, "I will have him pull weeds" and took Derid with him. For a few days, Derid crawled around the vegetable beds in agony, but admits, "that man saved my life." Finally he was returned to his former workplace at the factory.

Again and again when Dr. Oledy Petrovich Derid recalls his life in that period, he comes back to the work training camp. Then the elderly gentleman jumps up, gesticulating wildly in an effort to communicate the reality of those days with desperate gestures. The fear of death becomes perceptible again sixty years later in the hotel room. "For the daily ration of 125 grams of bread we all had to run to a small window, from which the pieces of bread were thrown. Those who did not run were beaten with the stick until they fell to the ground screaming. If anybody failed to catch their bread, it remained on the ground and it was forbidden to pick it up. A minor matter. No, it was not a minor matter. It was a way of 'educating' us. Do you understand?"



From the Work Training Camp to the Filtration Camp

Thus, every rule of conduct became a law of survival. Even the thought of violating them triggered fear. "Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the world," Jean Améry later wrote. "The shame of destruction cannot be erased. That one's fellow man was experienced as the anti-man remains in the tortured person as accumulated horror. It blocks the view into a world in which the principle of hope rules. One who is martyred is a defenseless prisoner of fear. It is fear that henceforth reigns over him." This shattering of basic trust in the world was one of the "educational purposes" inherent in the concept of National Socialist work training camps (AEL). From 1940 onward, these Gestapo facilities tried to improve the working discipline of forced laborers with heavy labor and torture. In fact, however, companies increasingly complained about receiving back cripples who had been tortured until they were unfit for work.

Workers were not intended to remain at work training camps indefinitely, as their labor was needed: fifty-six days was the maximum period envisaged. This was the sole difference between a work training camp and a concentration camp. No one who was categorized as unfit for further work at a work training camp escaped a concentration camp transport anyway. Toward the end of the war, the work training camps, of which there were twelve on the territory of present-day Austria (see Appendix), were turned into places of execution where the Gestapo carried out mass shootings. A study by Gabriele Lofti established that at least every twentieth foreign civilian worker was detained in a work training camp once.

The arrival of the US Army in Linz in spring 1945 freed Derid from his physical, but not his emotional agony. He remained at the camp—the place with which he was familiar and that offered him security, although now former concentration camp prisoners searching for food occasionally released their pent-up hatred on former forced laborers.

Derid's comrades vainly tried to persuade him to move into the center of Linz or to climb onto American trucks. "They were able to emigrate to America, Canada, Australia or other countries. They were cleverer than I



was. I was the stupid one again. Like most of the others I went east." How could he have moved into an apartment in Linz with a clear conscience? "This apartment must have belonged to someone." Probably a Nazi who had fled. But, he insisted, "everything had to be legal, after all that happened before!" However, Oledy Petrovich Derid was mistaken again. Together with Russians and Ukrainians he was taken on a Red Army truck to a "filtration camp" located somewhere between Amstetten and Vienna, where military drill ruled and the interrogations started again, only this time carried out by the Soviet secret service, the KGB. Who? What? When? Why here? Didn't you help the German war effort? The rising tension of the Cold War fuelled suspicion. Weaving a new web of lies became a matter of survival.

Who Else Should I Write To? God?

Derid, who remembered his early youth when members of his family had disappeared overnight, never said he had been a forced laborer and tore the bottom off his photograph so that the "East" badge on his chest could not betray him. Up to one third of the filtration camp inmates disappeared. "Now, I am 100 percent certain they were sent to Siberia. 100 percent!" A careless word during an interrogation sufficed to arouse suspicion that someone had served the Nazi regime as a "spy" or "traitor to the fatherland." The Soviet soldiers came from the front and had experienced terrible things. Now they met compatriots wearing decent, albeit darned suits. "There was a moment when a soldier wanted to shoot us out of sheer fury about it. The others prevented him."

So Derid joined the Red Army as a soldier himself, said what was necessary ("Long live our teacher and father, Comrade Stalin..."), played chess and, once his artistic talent had been discovered, painted pictures of Soviet leaders, of victorious Russian and fleeing German soldiers, maps showing the routes of the victorious regiments and endless banner slogans. He finally ended up in Chisinau, where a sister of his mother had settled. She later even became the deputy minister of health. In March 1948, he left the army, became a lathe operator at a truck repair shop while also work-



ing as a stage design painter. He went on to study physics and eventually even became a professor of metallurgy. He now has an income of 200 lei (twelve lei are one US dollar) plus 35 lei in welfare benefits for his wife and a 130 lei pension because he still works even though he is over the retirement age. The rent for his one-room apartment is 50 lei, electricity costs 30 lei.

Dr. Derid has remained a stranger in his new home. The endless red tape involved with proving his exploitation as a forced laborer has demoralized if not destroyed him. On one occasion he sighed and burst out, "who else should I write to? To God?" A letter from the social insurance agency in Linz confirming that "Oledy Derid was employed at the Oberdonau Steel Plant from August 1, 1942 to May 5, 1945" resulted in his being given a 50 percent rebate on his electricity bill. But nobody was really interested in stories about his suffering—not his wife, not his children. "Leave it be, it is all in the past, forget it," they said. It was not until the sixteen-hour interview with psychologist Dr. Karl Fallend from the Institute of Psychology at the University of Innsbruck in summer 1999 (upon whose book this account is based) that Derid first tried to fully confront his memories. "That makes me feel good! That my life is of some interest to scholars! What do you call it when a priest sits with a person who tells him everything? Oh, confession ... That is very wise, very important. That is why I thank you for having come..."

Karl Fallend also dramatized his conversations with Derid in a play titled *An wen soll ich schreiben? An Gott?* [To Whom Should I Write? To God?] using words that were virtually identical to those in the book. The production commissioned by Landestheater Linz with Vasily Sotke in the leading role premiered on January 13, 2002, at the Kammerspiele theater. "The extent to which the city of Linz is shaped by traces of the National Socialist period ran through my work, rather like a red thread—which upon closer inspection proves to be brown," the author wrote in the program. Buildings from the Nazi period in the "red" working class district of Bindernichl were just as much part of it as the bold plans of Hitler (himself an Upper Austrian) to create a completely new Linz that would serve as a model city exemplifying German architecture of the future, as was the psychiatric hospital Niedernhart, where medical experiments were conducted on thousands of people, and of course the Hermann-Göring Works and the

Theater as a Collective Institution of Remembrance

Drama, Symposium, Exhibition, Memorial Stone, Books: Linz a Model

"For those who remember, the memory is always truth. In some cases, one with which he or she will live—have to live—for decades ... Theater is possibly a collective institution of remembrance." This is how Nikolaus Büchel describes the attitude with which he approached the production of a play by Karl Fallend at the Kammerspielen of the Landestheater Linz. Karl Fallend was born into a working-class family in Linz in 1956 and after obtaining a degree in psychology worked as a freelance scholar before joining the University of Innsbruck. Between 1998 and 2001, Fallend was a member of the historian's commission established on behalf of VÖEST-Alpine (in the Nazi period, Reichswerke Hermann Göring).

Fallend's text is based on the personal memories of Oledy Petrovich Derid and more than one hundred hours of interviews with a further two dozen foreign forced laborers from the war years. The interviews were only slightly adapted, condensed into a literary form and put into the mouths of five protagonists for the play. Derid's desperate question "Who Else Should I Write To? To God? (see the beginning of this chapter) was also the title of this piece that was commissioned by Landestheater Linz and performed eight times in early 2002. For the author, it was important not to stage these "sen-

sitive stories with the anti-fascist cudgel or a dramaturgy of reproaches." On the contrary, he wanted to provide a forum that would enable "these broken biographies simply to be listened to for one and a half hours on the stage."

On January 17 and 18, 2002, an international symposium dealing with Industry and Forced Labor under National Socialism was held at the Old Town Hall in Linz. In 1999, Linz set up a permanent exhibition on small presentation boards about the deployment of concentration camp prisoners at the city's iron and steel works. The exhibition is located near a memorial stone for the victims of the three satellite camps of Mauthausen concentration camp in Linz that was erected in 1953/54 by the French Section of the International Mauthausen Committee. This memorial on Lunzerstrasse is popularly referred to as the "French memorial."

In 2001, Fritz Mayrhofer and Walter Schuster published a two-volume study of National Socialism in Linz for the City of Linz Archive. Volume 2 of this work contains a detailed account by Hermann Rafetseder on "the employment of foreigners during the Nazi period considering the city of Linz as an example" in the chapter of the same title.



nitrogen factory with their huge demand for forced laborers. However, in the last decade it has to be said that Linz has made remarkable efforts to critically confront this past with both scientific and artistic projects.

Beria Obtained Approval for "Filtration" from Stalin

The establishment of "filtration camps" can be traced back to an ukas issued on May 11, 1945, by Generalissimus Josef Vissarionovich Stalin, the absolute ruler of the Soviet Union, in which he ordered the establishment of camps to vet Soviet prisoners of war and Soviet civilian internees who had been liberated in West Germany. The vetting committee for civilians was to be made up of representatives from the People's Commissariat (Ministry) for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the People's Commissariat for State Security and the military counterintelligence service SHMERSH, and was presided over by the NKVD.

Candidates for repatriation to the USSR and those to be handed over to allied countries were to be "filtered out" in a vetting procedure lasting no longer than two months. This order was—as General D. A. Volkogonov in his four-volume biography of Stalin also says—drawn up and presented to Stalin for his signature by Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria, the minister of the interior and head of the intelligence service. Beria's men were therefore responsible for the implementation of a program they had demanded themselves. In violation of the wording of Stalin's order, Soviet citizens who had been liberated by the Red Army were also subjected to this filtration and not just those who had been handed over by the Western Allies. Many of them (one third, as was the case in Derid's camp) were shipped off to "special settlements" in inhospitable regions in the Soviet Far East, for example to Altaiski Krai or Magadanskaya Oblast, on the grounds of actual or suspected political unreliability. There, they were assigned to forced labor again.

Stalin's edict refers to ten camps, but it has been proven that there were at least 159 such camps in the states that made up the former Soviet Union—105 Überprüfungslager (vetting camps—PFL), 18 Überprüfungsstel-



len (vetting points—PFP) and 36 Transitsammelstellen (transit collection points—SPP). The Russian historian Pavel Poljan provides a detailed account in his book *Victims of Two Dictatorships*, the second Russian-language edition of which was published in 2002. In Austria, there were nine camps, six of the first type: PFL 288 in Zwettl, PFL 298 in Melk (sometimes listed as Anzendorf), PFL 300 in St. Valentin, PFL 301 in Neunkirchen, PFL 305 in Wiener Neustadt and PFL 306 in Götzens. There was also a Soviet "special camp" in Kapfenberg and lastly, two SPP transit collection points.

How Evil Was Turned to Good

Ultimately, however, fate stole a march on Stalin and Beria, who had wanted to rid themselves of as many potential political opponents as possible. Sixty years after these tragic events, references to filtration camps in a number of applications to the German and Austrian agencies established to compensate forced laborers were used to establish a credible case that the applicants had also been forced to carry out forced labor for the Nazis. The authorities in the successor states to the Soviet Union also accepted documents from filtration camps as the basis for their "archive confirmations." This was extremely helpful to the applicants, as many of them had destroyed German documents (such as workbooks) before the "filtration." Applicants also repeatedly cited the double humiliation as grounds for their claim or expressed gratitude for the belated, but healing recognition of both ordeals.

So once more, in an unexpected fashion, the words of Khalil Gibran were confirmed: "the roots of the good and the bad, the fruitful and the fruitless, all entwined together in the silent heart of the earth."

Nevertheless, Stefan Karner and Peter Ruggenthaler warn in the book quoted earlier *Zwangsarbeit in der Land- und Forstwirtschaft auf dem Gebiet Österreichs 1939–1945* against the assumption that all former Eastern workers were sent "to the Gulag" or "to Siberia" after repatriation and vetting in a filtration camp. Interviews carried out by the authors showed



that "while the majority of Soviet repatriates were categorized as second-class citizens in their homeland and encountered hatred in a variety of forms," it also emerged "that most former forced laborers had been able to remain in their home villages until the 1990s—albeit with a stigma." (Volume 2, page 14)

Of course, one cannot ignore the fact that this conclusion refers only to former forced laborers from the agricultural sector, and it should also be remembered that many of those who were subsequently transported to a Gulag did not survive and are not therefore included in any current statistics. It is also likely that even today many people did not dare to make an application for a belated symbolic payment or were dissuaded from doing so by the local government office in their country because there are still people there who are inclined to be suspicious ("perhaps you really did act against the interests of our country at that time"). Many individuals had taken the precaution of destroying documents that confirmed their forced labor in German industry because they knew that the files of the Soviet intelligence service were sent home with those they documented, and that work in the armaments industry was, and still is, regarded as collaboration.

After filtration, Soviet "citizens of German ethnicity" were at particular risk of being deported to distant Siberia on the grounds of suspected opposition to the regime. This was the fate suffered by Elsa G. K.: she was not rehabilitated until 1956 and still lives in Altaiski Krai near the border to the People's Republic of China. Her daughter Lidia K. suffered the same fate. Anna G. and her daughter Ljubov I. O. ended up in Alania in the Republic of North Ossetia, a type of Cossack settlement on the River Terek. Lidia N. S. was forced to settle in Magadan in the Far East. Nineli M. Z., who had worked in a hospital in Neulengbach, was even compulsorily resettled by means of a court ruling. Yekatarina I. G., who together with her husband Emilian V. G. had been employed in Bruck and St. Marain, returned from Altaiski Krai to Transnistria. Magadan was the fate of Vassily M., who had fallen under suspicion because he had failed to return home immediately in 1945 and had instead worked for farmers in the US-occupied zone of Austria. These are just a few examples of the countless doubly tragic fates.



Nobody Went Completely Voluntarily

Of course, the reference to dual persecution should never be used to weigh up National Socialist and Stalinist crimes against each other or let one set of crimes cancel out the others. Every injustice was an injustice, and the injustice started with forced deportations by Nazi Germany. Presumably, nobody went to the West completely voluntarily—the hunger, homelessness and joblessness that prompted people to enter into employment contracts diminished the "voluntary" nature of their signatures from the start.

Yuri T. tells how as a 16-year-old Soviet citizen he was summoned to the employment office in the Ukrainian city of Dnepropetrovsk and told to "register voluntarily" for employment in Germany. If he refused, his relatives would be shot as hostages! He saw how young people were literally rounded up in raids on streets and at markets and transported to Germany in railway livestock cars. That too was classed as "volunteer recruitment." When the transport stopped briefly in Poland, Yuri T. said he was suffering from heart problems, but when a Pole at the hospital camp drew his attention to the fact that they were close to the Majdanek extermination camp, he quickly reported fit again. He finally ended up in Linz.

"Initially, we lived in Camp 21 near the entrance to the plant. The 15 to 20 wooden huts were surrounded by a barbed-wire fence, at each of the four corners there were armed guards in high wooden towers. Every morning camp police stormed into the wooden huts and woke us up with shouts and truncheon blows. After a while, about early 1943, we were transferred to Camp 57, some six kilometers away from the plant that we Russians called "the tank factory." Here we were no longer beaten with the truncheon and on certain days we were even permitted to go into town. The "East" badge that we had previously been forced to wear on our clothes was replaced by nationality badges: a blue St. Andrews cross against a white background with a red oval edge for Russians, a trident on a blue-yellow background for Ukrainians... "

And Yuri T. also remembers that, "in our camp there was an illegal organization called Orel led by our camp interpreter Anatoly Vlashko. It



was part of the resistance movement *Freies Österreich...*" Yuri was also a member of this organization, a fact confirmed by the Austrian Association of Former Prisoners at Mauthausen. He once saw how a Czech colleague rammed a glowing electrode into the muscle near his elbow after which the man's arm dropped lifelessly to his side. The three witnesses kept the secret of this self-mutilation until the end of the war—the Czech was allowed to return home. Moreover, there were repeated US air raids that more often hit civilian targets than the factory. "Physical and moral exhaustion meant that we slept deeply every night."

Her Father Came in the Night

Nadezhda T. A. was 13 years old when the German Wehrmacht occupied her village in White Russia, now Belarus. When the Germans withdrew, they drove the local population before them until they reached Latvia. From there, Nadezhda Timofeyena was taken to a camp in Linz where farmers selected workers. Her parents and two sisters went to one farmer, another sister to another farmer while she herself went to a third farmer, where there were a large number of children. The girl lived in a windowless annex, had to work in the stables and fields all day, and learned to mow—until she started bleeding from the mouth and became seriously ill. Her father, roused by a terrible nightmare, went to her on foot, found her lying sick on the floor and carried her 25 kilometers back to his own accommodation. But her disappearance was reported and the girl was brought back by the police. After their liberation by the Americans, the family returned to its village where everybody fought for survival and many starved to death. "I worked for farmers, brought home what I earned and fed the family."

Matters did not always take a turn for the better in 1945. Yekaterina Y. M., a Russian who is now a Lithuanian citizen, recalls how after liberation in 1945 she and other women were imprisoned in a distribution camp (*Verteilungslager*). "We told the camp officials everything, but they did not record our details. Now we can no longer prove anything. As Russian women we were hated, taken from one camp to another, the badges

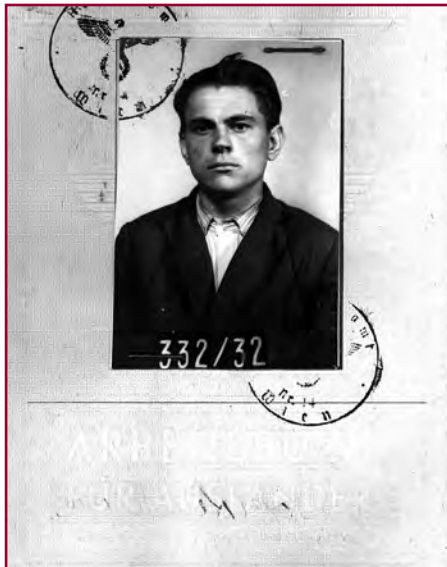


remained on our clothes—that meant we were 'backward,' 'Stalinist' prisoners" And she had a request to the women who processed her final (and successful) application in Vienna. "Dear ladies, excuse me, old age is no pleasure, I have remembered all the injustice from that time again..."

Especially Large Numbers of Victims from Ukraine

By far the largest number of survivors of forced labor in Austria live in Ukraine, in those days part of the Soviet Union, but now an independent state within the loose Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Pauline J., for example, worked on a farm in Styria until she became pregnant in 1944. Her employer reported it and she was picked up by the police, stretched over a table, tied to it and left in this position for 24 hours. Then she was assigned to even heavier labor. In January 1945, Pauline J. gave birth to the baby, which soon became ill and died—nobody told her the cause of the baby's death or where it was buried. As a child, Valentina M. P. was placed in the custody of a farmer's employee in the Tamsweg area. The woman was supposed to feed her, but was a sadist. When Valentina's mother saw how the caregiver demonstratively poured away milk intended for her daughter, she attacked the woman in desperation, pulling her by the hair, for which she was sentenced to a term in prison. The "master," however, was a kindly man who felt he had been treated humanely when he had been a Soviet prisoner of war. He repeatedly appealed on the mother's behalf and as a result she was released after two months.

Raisa A. E. from Simferopol in the Crimea worked at a hospital in Tyrol. A West Ukrainian man tried to make advances to her, but when she rejected his attentions he slandered her, accusing her of sharing her food with three Russian prisoners of war and of being a partisan. After that, she spent three months in a Salzburg prison where she was liberated by the Americans, sick and covered in suppurative pustules. The orchestra musician Volodymyr V. P. was deported to Vienna from Ukraine in 1943. In addition to physical labor, he was later allowed to teach at a music school and give camp concerts on Sundays with a group of musicians, singers and dancers. In 1945, he even received an offer from the Vienna State Opera. How-



1	Herkunftland	Distrikt Galizien
2	Geburtsdag	23. Juli 1923
3	Geburtsort	Stalyska Nowi
	Kreis	Lemberg
4	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	ungeklärt (Ukraine) (Polen)
	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	Polen Ukrainer 19. SEP. 1944 Gändert Arbeitsamt Wien
5	a) Familienstand led., verh., verw., gesch.	led.
	b) Anzahl der minderjährigen Kinder	

Workbook of a forced laborer from Ukraine, a country with a particularly large number of victims.

Source: Paul Rachler

ever, he wanted to return home, and now his teaching activities proved to be a disadvantage and he was condemned to work in a mine as an "enemy of the people." Alexandra A. B., who had been working in an arms factory, was relatively better off in a prison not far away from the camp to which she had been sent after a failed escape attempt. Upon release, she applied to work in the agricultural sector and the employment office in Graz arranged for her to work for a farmer, who of course exploited her from five in the morning to late at night. Alexandra S. S. was originally assigned to a farmer in Mittersill, but was unsuitable for the heavy physical labor. She was therefore sent to a "master" with a guesthouse where she had to wash floors and dishes. However, her refusal to empty chamber pots from the guest rooms resulted in police detention in Salzburg. At last she was detailed to sort clothes—she believes of murdered Jews—in a penal camp on the outskirts of the city. Ganna A. O. remembers how she was imprisoned in a Gestapo prison in Bregenz for collaborating with Russian prisoners of war, where she was harassed until the farmer by whom she had previously been employed came home on front leave and "freed" her. They still correspond today.



Bad and Good Employers

Anatoly K. S. first worked in a bauxite mine in the Alps but was arrested in November 1943 because he had told his comrades about Soviet military successes and also written to a girlfriend in Germany about them. A Ukrainian fireman in a slowly passing train had told him the news. He was interrogated at a prison in Steyr by the Gestapo, who also asked him about his father who lived in Dnepropetrovsk. His father was then also arrested and subsequently died. Other Gestapo interrogations in Linz were followed by backbreaking, debilitating quarry work. In desperation, he wanted to throw himself onto an electrified fence, but the foremen prevented him and assigned him to wash the containers from which the guard dogs received their food. He was allowed to take some of this food and in this manner regained his strength. He was hardly back on his feet again before he was sent to an Arbeitskräfteverteilungslager (labor distribution camp) in Linz where two doctors from Kiev who worked at the camp as medical orderlies diagnosed pleurisy. Anatoly was housed with inmates who were dying, but was eventually allowed to work on a farm, however, once again he was laid low by a high fever. The farmer provided him with medicine and sufficient food. Back home in Ukraine, he still has trouble with tuberculosis even today.

Some victims, perhaps with a foreboding of new persecution, did not return to their homes, preferring to emigrate to other countries instead. Alexandra B., for example, was born in Kharkov, but now lives in California after having spent ten and a half years with her family in Brazil. German soldiers confiscated their home in a Ukrainian village, after which the family lived in a barn and later on with neighbors. In fall 1943, all the inhabitants of the village were transported in rail cars to Linz. Men and women were separated, and Alexandra was taken to a camp together with her younger sister and pregnant mother. Her mother had to move heavy sacks of flour until shortly before the birth of her third child. Her father's unit was also set to work digging survivors and corpses out of the cellars of bombed buildings. The family was liberated from a camp in Salzburg by the Americans, but due to financial and language difficulties, and also various stays in the hospital, remained in the camp for a long time and was only able to emigrate in 1948. "My father became an alcoholic in Brazil



and died in 1986," Alexandra B. admits. "Sometimes I dream of seeing the beautiful city of Salzburg again, the lovely mountains and the smiling people who say 'Grüss Gott.'"

Anna M.-B., who was captured in her Ukrainian homeland, had similar experiences. "Anyone who tried to escape was shot. We were chosen like cattle" and taken to Tyrol in cattle cars. "At our farm, I slept in an unheated room and was always hungry. Occasionally, I stole a loaf of bread. I had to work twelve to fourteen hours every day and we were never allowed to go to the church across the road. I never saw my parents again." Anna M.-B. now also lives in the USA.

Crimean Tatars Were Mistreated by Everyone

The fate of the so-called Crimean Tatars was especially tragic. Many of them were recruited by German agents to support the Wehrmacht against the hated Russian oppressors. Following the German retreat from the Crimean Peninsula, the Nazi authorities planned to "reward" the "members of the Caucasian, Tatar and Turkic peoples" remaining in their sphere of influence for their alliance by excepting them from the rigorous provisions for "Eastern workers" and giving them their own "nationality badges," although these were never really used. Conversely, in May 1944 the Soviet government deported some 200,000 to 250,000 Crimean Tatars (together with approximately 20,000 Greeks, 20,000 Armenians and 17,000 Bulgarians) who had remained in their homeland to Central Asia, mainly Uzbekistan, and, whenever possible, destroyed all traces of their culture.

It was not until 1967 that Moscow absolved the Crimean Tatars from the collective accusation of collaboration with Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, an organized return home only became possible after 1989 when under Mikhail Gorbachev the Supreme Soviet condemned the forced deportations. Hundreds of thousands did indeed return, increasing unemployment, hunger and helplessness in the former Russian Soviet Republic that the head of the Communist Party and head of government Nikita Khrushchev had given to Ukraine. Today, some 60 percent of the just under two



The Crimean Tatar Feyzi Rahman Yurter served as a forced laborer and is now a writer in Germany.

Source: Privat

and a half million inhabitants of the Crimean Peninsula are ethnic Russians, 24 percent Ukrainians and 10 percent once again Crimean Tatars.

Between 1942 and 1944, groups of Crimean Tatars came to Austria where they were deployed building roads and in the mining industry, in factories and also in agriculture (frequently in equine hospitals). Nurie T., for example, worked in Eisen- erz, where hospital records show she was forced to have an abortion, demonstrating that this group of people was not given privileged treatment as a matter of principle.

The Crimean Tatar Feyzi Rahman Yurter was transported to a labor camp in Graz in fall 1944 and transferred to Innsbruck in January 1945, very definitely as an "Eastern worker." In his identity papers, Yurter, who now lives in Germany and is highly respected among his surviving compatriots as a Crimean Tatar writer, first stated that the Soviet Union was his country of birth, but then changed it to Turkey—because he suspected the fate that would await him upon his return as a Crimean Tatar. Comrades did the same. "Please acknowledge," he wrote in his request for compensation. Emine Z. was not spared a second banishment: She was forcibly transported from a piggery near Feldkirchen in Carinthia more or less directly to the Tashkent region, where she still lives today.

The case of Fevzi A. demonstrates that the collective accusation of alleged permanent collaboration with the Germans made against the Crimean Tatars by the Soviets cannot be upheld. Fevzi A. was imprisoned for ten weeks for attempting to escape from a Styrian metal working shop and then detained for two months at the penal camp in Niklasdorf. This time,

his escape was successful and he joined the Yugoslav partisans. Many Crimean Tatars perhaps did originally go to Germany voluntarily, but many were coerced with the threat that their families would suffer badly if they did not. Anyway, what is voluntary in an age when millions become victims of reciprocal entrapment and blackmail? What is collaboration when it is a matter of settling old scores, but above all a matter of sheer survival?

Poland Was to Be "Cleansed"

As mentioned earlier, the first forced laborers from Poland had originally been prisoners of war. However, as the Geneva Convention accords prisoners of war extensive rights and they receive regular visits from the International Red Cross, it was in the interests of the Nazi rulers to deprive them of this status as soon as possible. This happened as early as October and November 1939. However, instead of being allowed to return home, the Poles were coerced into labor as civilian workers. A few months lat-



1	Herkunftsland	Generalgouvernement
2	Geburtsdag	14. Februar 1926
	Geburtsort	Tschernochau
3	Kreis	
	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	staatenlos
4	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	Polen
	a) Familienstand led., verh., verw., gesch.	led.
5	b) Anzahl der minder- jährigen Kinder	

Workbook of a victim from Poland, from where the first foreign forced laborers came.

Source: Paul Rachler



er, the first concerted deportations to Reich territory (Austria included) commenced. A crucial factor for Nazi Germany was that, in accordance with the National Socialist ideology of a shortage of Lebensraum, broad swathes of Poland were to be "cleansed" of Poles whenever possible so that German farmers could be settled there. The southern Polish area around Zamość, which had a strong partisan presence, was a special case. Most of the men were shot under martial law, and the women and children deported to forced labor, predominantly in the agricultural sector.

Zofia F.-S., for example, who now lives in the USA, had to perform hard physical labor on a farm from five o'clock in the morning until late at night without proper food or clothing. She tried to escape twice, but was captured each time, put in prison and then transferred to another workplace. In 1943, she became pregnant and gave birth to a boy who was immediately taken away from her and died soon afterwards—she was never told the cause of death.

Stephen P., now also an American, was tied up by the mayor personally as soon as he arrived at the farm. During his forced labor, he broke his right leg, but received only inadequate medical treatment, as a result of which his leg was permanently damaged. His entire family was murdered at Auschwitz.

Sisters Reunited in Vorarlberg

The young Polish woman Sabina R. suffered an unexpected fate when with a heavy heart she mounted a train together with other young Polish women trying to escape the hunger and poverty in their own country. What nobody knew was that Sabina, who looked like all the other Polish women, was a Jewess. A former boyfriend of her older sister had advised her to apply for work in Germany in order to escape persecution. The girls all had tickets to Nenzing in Vorarlberg, where they were supposed to start work. For twelve hours a day, they sorted and darned uniforms at a textile factory and although they were under permanent guard, they received adequate food and were treated relatively decently. They were also



allowed to look around town and of course on Sundays attended mass at the nearby church.

On one such occasion, a busybody whispered to Sabina, who frequently acted as an interpreter, "look at the way Anna kisses the crucifix and she crosses herself the wrong way too. I am sure she is a Jew in hiding. Come with me to the overseer, let's report her and get the reward!" Sabina was able to dissuade the woman by saying, "she is a medical student and might be useful to us, especially the girls who fool about with the boys here..." Sabina later told Anna about what had happened and as their eyes met, they knew for sure what they had both suspected of one another.

When the girls wanted to go to church again another Sunday, Sabina persuaded them to go to a neighboring village because she was frightened of attracting attention to herself by making the wrong gestures. The tavern was full of soldiers on leave, farmers and newly arrived foreign workers from Poland. As a young woman approached the table and asked Sabina (who as so often was sitting shyly away from the crowd) if she could sit down, Sabina did not remove her hands from her face as she whispered a short "yes." Only then did she look up and was relieved that her cry of joy went unheard in the general commotion of the tavern. It was her younger sister, Mirjam, whom she had not seen for five years who was sitting beside her! The sisters were able to remain in contact with one another undiscovered, survived harm and later emigrated together to Palestine.

In her book *Um ihre Jugend betrogen – Ukrainische Zwangsarbeiter/innen in Vorarlberg 1942–1945* [Robbed of the Their Youth—Ukrainian Forced Laborers in Vorarlberg 1942–1945] published in 1996, Margarethe Ruff described "the very many forms that employment of foreigners could take," ranging from "being treated as one of the family on a farm to prison-like conditions at a construction site," depending on how high or low the worker ranked in the Nazi hierarchy of "inferior races" and whether the employer adhered to it or not. Ruff also provides detailed information about which foreign forced laborers were deployed at which Vorarlberg companies.



Czechs: Misled and Betrayed

Unlike Poland, which was still largely dominated by agricultural structures, industrialization was already fairly well advanced in Czechoslovakia. When Hitler reorganized the country as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and recruited workers for companies in the German Reich, the temptation was strong to try and improve one's situation at the nearby Hermann-Göring Works or the nitrogen factories in Linz, both of which paid well. However, no sooner had the war begun than most of these people were refused permission to go home, even though their employment contracts had come to an end. In keeping with National Socialist racial policy, Czech intellectuals and specialist workers were to be repressed and opportunities for the emergence of political resistance reduced.

The assassination of Deputy Reichsprotector Reinhard Heydrich in May 1942 by Czech agents of the government in exile increased the brutality of the occupation and also led to a new wave of forced recruitment of well-trained specialists. Punishments for those who refused to work, tried to escape from their place of work and saboteurs also became more draconian. Of course, Czechs stood greater chances of reaching their homeland after escape than Ukrainians and Russians. However, those who were captured increasingly ended up in concentration camps or work training camps. Members of the initially self-confident Czech community in Vienna were also robbed of their schools and assigned to work well below their level of qualifications.

The Henchmen of Schörghub

Czechs who were interned at the work training camp (AEL) Schörghub near Linz describe horrifying scenes. Documents also sometimes refer to the "satellite camp Wegscheid," which has turned out to be a misleading second designation for the AEL Schörghub. Today, the area is part of the city of Linz. Former prisoners have repeatedly said that conditions there were worse than those in concentration camps. The representative of the

Nr. 4,220. 902		801a	
ARBEITSBUCH PRACOVNÍ KNÍŽKA (Reg.-Vdg. vom 26. Juni 1941, Nr. 241 Slg.) (Vlád. nař. ze dne 26. června 1941, čís. 241 Sb.)			
Familienname (bei Frauen auch Geburtsname) Příjmení (u žen též rodné jméno)			
Vorname (Taufname) Jméno (křestní)			
Tag, Monat und Jahr der Geburt Den, měsíc a rok naroz.	2. února 1896		
Geburtsort — politischer Bezirk Místo narození — politický okres	Újezd - Týn n/lt.		
Staatsangehörigkeit Státní občanství	Protektorát Čechy a Morava		
Familienstand (led., verh., gesch., verw.) Stav (svob., žen., vd., rozl., vdovc.)	řemělný		
Geburtsjahre der minder- jährigen Kinder Rok narození nezletilých dětí	1929		

Workbook of a forced laborer from Bohemia/Moravia who worked in industry: seduced and betrayed.

Source: Paul Rachler

German camp administration was a Ukrainian overseer who frequently chased all 300 inmates out of the wooden huts and then made them run around the courtyard. Prisoners slept in cramped quarters, 60 to 90 in a tiny room. Early in the morning, they were driven out to breakfast with whips. Punishments such as standing at attention in the courtyard or being tied to a corpse in the mortuary were imposed on a daily basis for such minor infractions as leaving the workplace or falling out of line (many prisoners had dysentery).

According to an account by Jan H. kept in the archive of the Czech Council for Victims of National Socialism (No. 4284), "the first two days after arrival, prisoners received no food at all, then a small piece of bread." "We were imprisoned as numbers. Sixty to seventy people were penned in a room measuring five by five meters. Every morning, water was poured over the wooden floors and in the evening it was still frozen. We slept with our clothes on, lying close to one another on the floor or against the column in the middle of the room or the door. We waited for a space, for someone to die. It was survival of the fittest. At morning roll call, the door was opened and the overseers came in, beating the prisoners with sticks to the left and the right. The piece of bread we were given for breakfast was so small it fit into the palm of your hand and everyone ate it right away by the window and drank the coffee (if you could call it coffee) that went with it. There was no lunch at all, and in the evening we received a stinking soup made of turnips or a few potatoes. Any absence from the workplace, no matter how necessary, could mean death. Prisoners were made to stand at attention in the courtyard until they collapsed."

Zdeněk R., No. 11.222 in the same archive tells a similar story. "If someone couldn't stand it any longer and collapsed, like an Italian once did, the Ger-



man soldier shouted 'stand up' and when the Italian dragged himself up the German shot him from a distance of only a few steps away. If soldiers found cigarettes or anything edible during their searches, the person was picked up by a black truck or beaten to death on the spot by two soldiers with the butts of their guns." Life in such a camp "is worse than terrible," said Josef K., No. 20.502. "The food was inedible, the wooden huts were infested with lice, full of filth and they stank to high heaven. There were 90 of us prisoners in the room. There were barrels with handles in the hall for excrement, and these had to be taken out every day." Jan S., No. 38.725, also complains about the "notorious broth made of rotten turnips" and the degrading living conditions. "Every night, I dropped onto my lice-ridden frame bed tired and exhausted..." Josef D. No. 22.780 in the Victims Council archive will "never forget. For a few months of my life I was nothing more than Number 20."

Easier for Slovaks to Return Home

In contrast to the situation in Bohemia and Moravia, forced laborers from Slovakia only came to Austria in the last year of the war. This was because Slovakia, under the presidency of its nationalist-fascist leader, the Roman Catholic priest Jozef Tiso, was allied to Nazi Germany until the middle of 1944. In August 1944, partisans and sections of the army staged an uprising against the Tiso government. After its suppression, Slovak citizens were deported in reprisal to carry out forced labor, mainly to the area around Linz. Even before 1944, Slovaks had been recruited to work voluntarily in the agricultural sector on the territory of present-day Austria, nothing unusual for many seasonal laborers. However, now they were no longer permitted to return home. Most of them were individuals who were there alone, as there was no mass deportation of entire families from Slovakia. From fall 1944 onward, local employment offices and the German Wehrmacht also conscripted large numbers of young people to forced labor.

"I spent nine months on a large farm in Hainburg, working twelve hours a day with no breaks," Karolina G. M. from Oravské Veselé remembers almost 60 years later. "A truck brought us over the border in spring 1944.



Workbook of a forced laborer from Slovakia: many tried to escape.

Source: Paul Rachler

By Christmas, I was home again. Fifty of us slept in a single room—men on one side, women on the other. Unfortunately, I have no documents because I threw them all away to avoid being discovered by the Communist regime. The secret police searched our houses and if they had found anything (author's note: anything that would indicate she had worked for the Germans), I would have been in serious trouble."

Ludovít B. from Štefánikovo was serving in the Slovak military when the uprising broke out in 1944. After the Germans disarmed his unit, he made his way home, working for a farmer in Slovakia in exchange for bread and civilian clothing. He was arrested by a Wehrmacht unit in Ružomberok and taken to Austria—a fate that usually befell two groups, namely partisans and well-built civilians. B. was certainly one of the latter. A construction company in Linz employed him to clear away bomb debris and construct air raid shelters. His story was probably fairly representative of those of many of his compatriots in similar situations.

A "Morning Prayer" for Slovenian Women

"We herewith confirm that the KHD maiden Maria G., born on ..., was employed as a chemicals worker at our detonator factory from October 30, 1943, to May 16, 1944, and conducted herself well during this period. Heil Hitler! Dynamite factory St. Lambrecht," signature illegible. In some respects, this official document was typical. Women who submitted to the conditions of forced labor received certificates of good conduct and were attributed the character of a "maiden" like German girls if their forced labor was performed within the framework of the War Auxiliary Service (KHD). War Auxiliary Service always followed Reich Labor Service (RAD), which was compulsory for all young people. And down to the present-day, an illegible signature has remained a shield for bureaucrats who basically want to evade responsibility for their decisions.

Like all Slovenian girls, Maria G. was obliged to serve in the RAD and KHD. Many then also had to spend an additional year working in the agricultural sector. Men almost never escaped this "agricultural service," and were mostly conscripted into the German Wehrmacht once they had fin-



1	Herkunftsland	DEUTSCHES REICH
2	Geburtsdag	15. Mai 1910
	Geburtsort	St. Veit
3	Kreis	St. Veit
	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	Magyarisch (ehemaliges Jugoslawien)
4	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	Slovaine
	a) Familienstand	led.
5	b) Anzahl	

ARBEITSBUCH FÜR AUSLÄNDER

Workbook of a forced laborer from Slovenia: suffered in many different ways.

Source: Paul Rachler



ished it. In addition, some 63,000 Slovenian men and women were forcibly evacuated and deported in all directions. Their small country was alternately occupied by German, Italian and Hungarian troops—frequently in remembrance of political claims to power from the past—who demonstrated their superiority by deporting entire families. No trace was to be left on the map of this northwestern Slav outpost in Central Europe. These efforts also included a program of forced Germanization. Healthy children were taken away from their Slovenian parents and put up for adoption by Germans.

Silva D. from Trbovlje has a moving story to tell. After a three-year apprenticeship at a sewing factory in Kranj (Krainburg), she was given home leave in summer 1941, after which she was supposed to return to her workplace. However, she was summoned to a medical examination—culminating in a group transport of young girls to Austria, where they were needed in arms factories, companies and households. Silvia D. was assigned to an embroidery factory in Graz. In 1943, her sister suffered a similar fate. "Strong homesickness, poor food and accommodation, hunger, heavy labor from seven in the morning to seven in the evening." An escape attempt by the two sisters ended a few days later with their arrest and Gestapo interrogations in a concrete cellar. Silvia D. was taken to Maribor (Marburg) and put in a cell with twelve other women. "One of them was terminally ill, as was the case in every cell, with no doctor, that was deliberate ... In the morning, we were given green water, they called it tea (so that we wouldn't have our periods), and hard bread, the flour had been mixed with sand ... When the overseer came in the morning, there was no 'good morning' but a so-called prayer: 'March, get up, you stinking Communist bitches (although there was not a single Communist among us), take the crap bucket out!'" One night they were woken up, driven through Maribor and shipped off by train to Graz. "This detention was much more humane than in Maribor. When I fell sick and was unable to work, Mr. and Mrs. W. were kind to me and took me to the district hospital in Graz to see a doctor they knew. He was very friendly. He suspected that I had tuberculosis but he had no more medicine to give. The W. family took me with them to Gratkorn, I worked on a farm with forced laborers from Poland, Ukraine and Russia and slowly got back on my feet again. On April 1, 1945, I was released. I fell to my knees and wept with joy."

The Niece of the Heir Apparent's Assassin

Archduke Franz Ferdinand von Österreich-Este, who since 1896 had been the heir apparent to his uncle Franz Joseph I, and his wife Sophie Duchess of Hohenberg were assassinated on June 28, 1914, in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo by a Bosnian-Serb nationalist, Gavrilo Princip. The First World War could no longer be prevented. In December 2001, a former high-ranking official of the Austrian Foreign Ministry—Fund Secretary General Ambassador Richard Woltava—stood face to face with the former forced laborer V. P. in Belgrade and presented her with a check from the Austrian Reconciliation Fund. In 1942, V. P., a niece of the heir apparent's murderer, was deported to Austria from Sarajevo and forced to work at a factory in the Lower Austrian Industrial Quarter on account of her uncle's crime. The Lower Austrian Regional Health Fund still has her files. In 1943, she received home leave and from then on successfully hid at the home of friends until the end of the war.

Since then, V.P., who now lives in Belgrade, has consistently asserted that one had to strictly differentiate between Germans and Austrians in those

1	Herkunftsland	Serbien
2	Geburtsdag	23. April 1914
3	Geburtsort	Yosau
	Kreis	Udina
4	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	shomah Jugoslawien
	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	Serbe
5	a) Familienstand fed., verh., verw., gesch.	verh.
	b) Anzahl der minderjährigen Kinder	

Workbook of a forced laborer from Serbia: reconciliation is especially important.

Source: Paul Rachler



days. The Austrians always treated her correctly and repeatedly assured her that she had nothing to fear because of her relative. An Austrian camp doctor repeatedly issued her with certificates declaring her unfit for work so that she could recover from the strain of the forced labor. Her experiences in this period could have been due to any number of factors, perhaps it was even coincidence that she was treated so well, as there were enough cases when Austrian Nazi henchmen were even more brutal than the Germans. The symbolic redress she received almost six decades later was not a coincidence. It is living history that offers hope: no retribution against entire families for the actions of one member, no endless cycle of revenge, no embarrassment, but instead a consistent recognition of historic facts.

Reconciliation Requires an Acceptance of the Truth

There is also a chance for peace on the Balkans if it is built on the basis of social justice and magnanimity. Even the Habsburg family sent a message of "forgiveness" to Gavrilo Princip during his imprisonment in Theresienstadt in Bohemia. As he was too young to be condemned to death, he was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment instead. He was handcuffed by both hands to the walls of his cell and died of bone tuberculosis in 1918, after suffering excruciating pain and being tortured by his conscience. Otto Habsburg, the great nephew, and Georg Hohenberg, the grandson of the murdered archduke, repeated this commitment to forgiveness on the ninetieth anniversary of the assassination in 2004 (on the German television station ARD, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, June 22, 2004). In Hohenberg's exact words, "we stumbled into the war, without knowing what was happening to us. It was the incomprehensible suicide of Europe." The continent's resurrection as a united Europe presupposes a reconciliation with historical reality. After the conquest of Yugoslavia by Nazi Germany in spring 1941, Serbs were deported to the German Reich and minorities such as the Roma and Jews were persecuted and murdered. The Croats established the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) under German patronage, because in line with his support for a separate Slovak state, Hitler regarded the Croatian state as a welcome fragmentation of a Slavic country.



The Croatian Ustasha proceeded to take violent action against the Serbs and imprisoned them in concentration camps such as Stara Gradiška, Jasenovac or Sisak, murdering tens of thousands. The part of Bosnia bordering Croatia also came under the control of the Ustasha state, so a number of Bosnian Muslims served in the pro-fascist Handžar Division.

Northern Serbia (Vojvodina) was occupied by Hungary, Southern Serbia by the Germans, Kosovo and Montenegro by the Italians and Albanians. Serb forced laborers on Austrian territory were mostly housed in the camps Strasshof ("Young Serbs' Camp"), Thalerhof and Götzendorf and were put to work building the airport, but also in Vienna-Siebenhirten and in Eisenerz. After the capitulation of the Royal Yugoslav Army in April 1941, many of its officers and soldiers were brought to the Stammlager (Stalag, main camp for prisoners of war) in Krems and Markt Pongau, and used for forced labor just like civilians who had been captured in large-scale raids. Other soldiers had already been dismissed from the army before its capitulation and were then conscripted by the Germans for forced labor in order to prevent them from joining the partisans.

Empty Promises for Croats

In keeping with the distribution of political power described above, the fate of Croats in the Nazi period could vary considerably. The Ustasha state NDH encouraged the recruitment methods of the Germans, who enticed workers with generous financial promises that they then failed to keep. Croatian forced laborers were also poorly paid and prevented from returning home. Istria and parts of Dalmatia were occupied by Italian troops; after the capitulation in 1943, women in particular were sent as urgently needed workers to carry out forced labor in the west. Sometimes they were accused of having supported the partisans, but usually no explanation was given. Ethnic Germans, especially in the north and east of Croatia, were promised houses and cattle in Germany, but their fate was no different than that of other forced laborers. Usually the women and children were deployed in Upper Austria and housed in refugee camps while the men were conscripted into the Wehrmacht. One of these was

1	Herkunftslond	Ungarn
2	Geburtsdag	16. März 1924
3	Geburtsort	Pejeana
	Kreis	Sarantka
4	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	Ungarn
	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	Ungar
5	a) Familienstand led., verh., verm., gesch.	led.
	b) Anzahl der minderjährigen Kinder	

Workbook of a forced laborer from Croatia: many were deceived and cheated.

Source: Paul Rachler

the father of Franjo G., who was deported to Austria together with his mother, grandmother and four siblings. Franjo G. was assigned to labor on a farm and then at a quarry, while his father served in the German army.

Karlo D., an ethnic Croat from Bosanski Brod, was recruited to work as an unskilled laborer in Vienna in 1941. He requested a travel pass in order to visit his mother's grave, was put off until the next day by the site manager and picked up by the police at midnight. This was the start of his ordeal in several police detention centers and workplaces in Vienna. A few days after his liberation, he married an Austrian woman he had met in Vienna and emigrated with her to Australia. Jaroslav S. was born in March 1945 in the "concentration camp Linz" (presumably the work training camp Schörghenhub). While neither he nor his sister Zdenka C. remember the period their father (a former first violinist at the Zagreb Opera) spent as a forced laborer, they do remember his emotional accounts: He became mentally ill, slit his wrists, was saved by a doctor but died a short time later. "For years," his daughter wrote to the Austrian embassy in Zagreb, "I have been in an invisible prison without doors, all my life I have suffered from anxiety in confined spaces..."



Jews and Roma: Victims in Romania

As the Romanian regime under General Ion Antonescu had participated in Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, the area in southern Ukraine between the rivers Dnjestr (Dnister) and Bug was placed under Romanian administration as "Transnistria." Today, it is part of the Republic of Moldova. However, instead of restoring land from the state-owned cooperative farms to the largely Ukrainian and Russian peasant population, the new masters conscripted them to work instead. In many cases, the forced relocation of the Swabians and Saxons to Germany also ended with forced labor and not a new freedom.

Many Jews and Roma were sent to carry out forced labor in Transnistria. Furthermore, in 1940, Romania had been forced to cede Bessarabia and Bukovina to the Soviet Union. After the reconquest of these areas by Romanian troops at the side of Germany, the Jews living there were subjected to particular torment for allegedly having collaborated with the Soviet administration. Many were deported to Transnistria for extermination. As a result, the Jewish population of Odessa was decimated from over 44,000 at the end of 1941 to less than one hundred a year later. As soon as the city was taken, 18,000 people were shot as hostages in reprisal for the extremely heavy losses suffered by the Germans in the battle for Odessa. In the fall of 2004, the Romanian parliament declared that October 9 would henceforth be a day of remembrance for the 250,000 murdered Jewish citizens and the 12,000 murdered Roma, whose deportation had started in the "death train" (trenul mortii) to Transnistria on October 9, 1941.

In 1942, during a second phase of the Romanian fascist policy of extermination, a large number of Jews, mostly from Bukovina and southern Romania, were deported to Transnistria, as were some 25,000 Roma. The purpose of such "ethnic cleansing" was to help Romania achieve a more ethnically homogenous population structure. Finally, there were also plans to relocate the 130,000-strong German minority in Transnistria to the Crimean Peninsula. Toward the end of the war, the Romanian government permitted a limited number of emigrations to Palestine in an effort to indicate its readiness to conclude a separate peace with the Western Allies. When Antonescu was put on trial after the war, it was above all



for betraying "Romanian interests" by linking Romania with the German armaments industry. Virtually no mention was made of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish and Roma victims. Some of the forced laborers in Transnistria were driven further westward. In Austria, they mostly ended up in the "Romanian Camp" on Augustinergasse in Salzburg. Among them were Constantin and Georgeta C., whose father was stationmaster at Balca on the Adjud-Palanca line. "At the end of August 1944 when Romania broke its alliance with Germany, the Germans increased deportations of Romanian civilians in our area. Together with the families of other railway employees we were forced into freight cars and deported." The railway workers now had to work for the German Reichsbahn, while their wives were put to work sewing German military uniforms and their children carried out cleaning work, cleared away debris or dug ditches. "My mother caught a lung disease and never regained her health... Our very beings were threatened by disease, malnutrition and the horror of death," is how Constantin C. puts it using words of by no means hollow pathos.

Romanian Camp in Salzburg

Most of the forced laborers sent to Austria from Romania ended up in the Romanian camp, which was located on the premises of Bräustübl brewery on Augustinergasse in Salzburg. "Every day, from morning to night, I had to bring medicine to various pharmacies in Salzburg on a tricycle," says Anton D. from Constanza, who had been "taken along" by a retreating Wehrmacht unit. Eugenia D. from Baia Mare tells a similar tale: "My parents and we two children were hit hard both mentally and physically by this involuntary exile." Ioan V. from Sibiu says, "in August 1944, the German troops regarded us as war booty and shipped us off to Germany, despite our parents' protests." The Romanian Camp on Salzburg's Augustinergasse, he remembers, was bombed three times. After liberation, the family went home in fall 1945 with only their hand luggage; the bedroom, dining room and kitchen furniture, carpets, bed linen and household goods they had brought with them for a "new German future" had to be left behind.



Workbook of a forced laborer from Romania: above all Jews and Roma.

Source: Paul Rachler

Istvánné B. and her daughter Rozsa arrived in Völkermarkt on the back of a Hungarian military truck as late as April 1, 1945, and were assigned to the kitchen of a military hospital. It is the last stage of her ordeal that is so unusual. Following Romanian capitulation, mother and daughter, as Hungarian citizens, were assigned to work at a Hungarian military hospital. Their names were inadvertently, they assumed, placed on one of the hospital's lists and they had to make an immediate decision about whether to continue to Germany or risk a court martial. "An order was an order."

Irene D. also stumbled from one misfortune to another. When the Red Army reached Timisoara, she left the city because it was said that all children of German soldiers (she had given birth to a son in 1944) would be killed. She traveled in a horse-drawn cart to Austria, where she had to work in the agricultural sector for a year. Upon returning to Romania, Irene D. was once again imprisoned in a labor camp for one year and seven months for collaboration with the enemy.

Etelca C. was twelve when she and her mother were deported from Transylvania to Austria as ethnic Germans. In Eggelsberg in Inviertel, the foreign laborers were assigned to work on a country estate. Each day, the



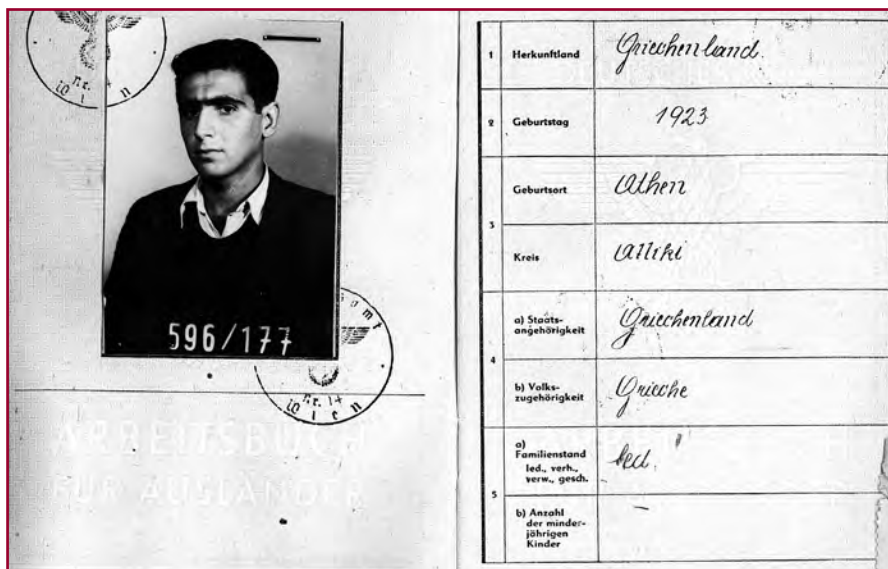
girl had to carry milk canisters weighing ten to twelve kilograms to a collection point several kilometers away—with only sandals on her feet even when there was snow. She repeatedly took comfort from a crucifix at the side of the road. As the Soviet front moved closer, another ethnic German, Maria V., was also induced to flee from the Banat to Hungary, and then on to Vienna and the district of Horn. There, she had to work for a farmer, tending his household, fields and garden. In 1945, the Russians forced her and others like her to return to Romania.

A Russian accompanied two families who had decided to travel together as far as Arad. There he sold the horse and wagon and dropped the families off on an open field, where they were found by a farmer who forced them to work on his farm. And so the punishments continued for having left their homeland. "I did heavy labor for 30 years and now only receive a minimum pension. Not everyone is fortunate in life..."

A Greek Who Was Deceived but Feels No Hatred

Forced laborers who came from Greece following the occupation of that country by the German Wehrmacht in 1941 were either "volunteers" driven by hunger and propaganda, captured members of the resistance or persons who had been arbitrarily rounded up by the German occupation forces. If working conditions were still tolerable in the beginning (food stamps, a day off on Sunday, even wages in some cases), they soon became harsher and, for the mutinous, barbaric. Christos G. was perfectly satisfied with the factory work that had been forced on him in Vienna, but when SA men came to check the beds with pitchforks and drive people to work, he already felt cheated as a "voluntary worker." Later, he and other family members were taken to the Hungarian border to dig anti-tank ditches. Laborers suffering from exhaustion were "perked up" with fists and rifle butts, and it was in this brutal manner that his own molar teeth were smashed.

Fourteen-year-old Sarkis Bogos K. from Athens was forced to emigrate with his entire family when the German occupiers burned down their



Workbook of a forced laborer from occupied Greece: empty promises.

Source: Paul Rachler

whole settlement. Twelve hours of heavy labor at a Lower Austrian armaments factory awaited them all. "I worked for a total of nine months under extremely difficult conditions. It is clear that our story is a very long one, and there are many details that I do not want to describe. Nevertheless, I would like to say that I never felt any hatred for the Austrian people."

Christos P., who was arrested by the Gestapo in April 1943, was sentenced in Athens to 15 years imprisonment on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations of espionage. He was taken by train from Athens to prison in the Lower Austrian town of Krems. "On one occasion, I was whipped because I had dared to look out of my cell window." There was no reluctance to kill either. "That day, I escaped with two other prisoners and after 17 days we arrived in Wagram. An Austrian hid us, which saved our lives."

The 17-year-old Athenian Georgios C. was enticed to the west with promises that his hunger would vanish overnight. He was forced to work in a locomotive factory in Wiener Neustadt. Some 15 of his comrades were deployed at the Vienna-Schwechat airfield, "none of them returned—because of the strain of the work there." Georgios C., however, made friends with an extremely hospitable family in a village to which he retreated dur-



ing air raids. Today he can say, "when I talk about this country, I regard it as my second homeland."

His experiences contrast sharply with those of 17-year-old Antonia P., originally from Italy, who was enticed to Germany from Thessalonica by the Germans. She had to dig trenches on the Austrian-Hungarian border and was hospitalized with frostbite. When the war ended, she was in Vienna surrounded by corpses and wild animals "that had escaped from the zoo following the destruction of their cages and now attacked both the living and the dead."

The Dutch also Got "25ers"

One might assume that West Europeans, who ranked far higher in the National Socialist racial hierarchy, would have been treated significantly better than the "Eastern workers." However, despite their more "Germanic" origins, many a Dutch person remembers that reality was different. In June 1943, the German occupying forces assigned Willem D. from Amsterdam to a transport to Cologne. However, he and a friend boarded a different train and at last he found himself in Vienna, where he was dragged from one work training camp to the next. During his heavy labor, he caught a middle ear infection, diphtheria and typhus and among other things ended up being interrogated by the Gestapo at Morzinplatz, where he was beaten for seven days with fists, sticks and belts. "I was 19 years old at the time—and all that from people who had been well cared for by neutral Holland after the First World War. What a contrast! What should you make of that? ... Now I am 77 and know that I had a guardian angel. Words cannot describe what I experienced"—and all because he got on the wrong train!

In Vienna in May 1943, the Gestapo caught Johann A. from Malden and a friend who were trying to escape to Yugoslavia, sent them to the work training camp (AEL) Oberlanzendorf and assigned the pair to forced labor at a joinery. "It was not just heavy labor, it was cruelty. For example, we had to trot around a huge square in the blazing sun and water it with



Workbook of a forced laborer from the Netherlands: good and bad experiences with Austrians. Source: Paul Rachler

a watering can. The food was bad and there wasn't enough of it. We were robbed of all humanity." This was followed by work at an arms factory, a failed escape attempt in Cologne and finally Oberlanzendorf again. "It had become even worse since my escape. I got a 25er for stealing bread: 25 blows with a stick..." Nevertheless, "I have forgiven all those who were involved. But I cannot forget anything. My body and my soul remind me of it all every day."

H. C. from Arnheim was deployed as a measurement and control technician at the Hermann-Göring Works in Linz and lived in the camp at Kleinmünchen. One day, although he was sick, the Werkschutz (security guards) with German Shepherd dogs dragged him and a number of others to the police station in Linz, where officers shouted, "the Dutch come here to work and once they've been paid they refuse to work!" He pointed out that he had not come to Linz voluntarily and finally was able to gain admission to a hospital, where he was treated for 39 days. Instead of prescribing a period of recuperation in Styria "a very nice doctor" issued him with a holiday pass for Holland, "a pretty girl behind the typewriter" took care of the rest, winked at him and instead of a yellow holiday pass issued a red travel pass which did not oblige him to return.




Johann van Z. from Amsterdam had to work hard and without pay for a farmer in Gilgenberg in the district of Braunau, but he was treated well and is today above all grateful for the memory of the "most beautiful spring of my life" after his liberation in 1945. He made many friends and only returned home in October. In 1952, he came back to Gilgenberg as a visitor and took his pen friend back to Holland with him, where they got married.

Belgium and the Netherlands were occupied by German troops in 1940. Even in the beginning when those who signed up for work in the Reich supposedly did so voluntarily, it was often under duress: "If you don't go, we'll conscript your father!" Later, employment offices conscripted workers of their own accord, or young people were picked up in raids and immediately deported. Dutch citizens in Austria were frequently deployed to the greater Vienna, Linz and Graz areas, as well as to smaller towns in Upper and Lower Austria. Mobile gangs of construction workers accompanied Wehrmacht units. Belgians were predominantly deployed in and around Vienna and citizens of both countries were also frequently assigned to the postal and railway services.

Trading with the French

One hundred and fifty thousand of the 600,000 civilian men and women who had to carry out forced labor in Austria were from France. The basis for this was a law introducing a form of conscription for laborers enacted by the Vichy regime in February 1943 with the aim of obtaining the release of French prisoners of war. Men born in 1920, 1921 and 1922 had to undergo a medical examination, and if certified as healthy were deported to Germany for obligatory work (Service du Travail Obligatoire, STO). There they found contact persons in all larger companies, usually German- and French-speaking Alsations or priests with a knowledge of French, who were also frequently deported. French patriots had diverse opportunities to harm the hated regime on its own territory: from the betrayal of secrets to active resistance.



1	Herkunftsland	Frankreich
2	Geburtsdag	29. August 1923
3	Geburtsort	A. Glivac le bois
	Kreis	Prov. de Poitou
4	a) Staatsangehörigkeit	Frankreich
	b) Volkszugehörigkeit	Franzose
5	a) Familienstand led., verh., verw., gesch.	led.
	b) Anzahl der minder- jährigen Kinder	

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Workbook of a forced laborer from France: problems after returning home.

Source: Paul Rachler

This resistance usually took the form of sabotage and proved disastrous for many laborers, as it resulted in their being transported to work training camps from which they either returned scarred and damaged for life, or not at all. Of course, armed resistance underground was more spectacular than acts of sabotage. Jean-Robert G. is a case in point, and his story is documented in detail at the Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance. After a strike organized by Jean-Robert G., one of his comrades was to be sent to AEL Oberlanzendorf. Jean-Robert G., however, voluntarily reported in his place, but instead of being taken to the camp he was taken to Steinhof psychiatric hospital.

After several months, he was then assigned to construct fortifications and entrenchments on the rapidly approaching Eastern front on the grounds of "recalcitrant behavior." However, his tormenters were unable to break his will even here, and he once again risked his life by organizing a resistance group. Francis J. started his journey to Vienna by train from the station at Issoudun, some 200 kilometers south of Paris in March 1943. Like many others, he experienced the transit camp at Strasshof as a veritable concentration camp. Francis J. worked as a forced laborer at the Ternitz steel plant until the end of the war and was housed at the



Rohrbach and Schneeberg camps. Several times, he was hospitalized with food poisoning. During this period of his life, Francis J. was able to keep a detailed diary and his chronicle was the main source for a master's thesis by Paul Schieder that was completed in 2003. Schieder's interest had been stimulated by the working group Forced Labor under the Swastika in Schwarzatal that had been formed in Ternitz to critically confront this aspect of contemporary history; pleasing proof that the "dialogue between the generations" does not necessarily have to exhaust itself in financial transfers. Many French men and women put pen to paper and recorded their memories of the time they spent performing forced labor and sent them to the Reconciliation Fund. One of them was Robert Quintilla from Narbonne, who followed his application with a 200-page manuscript in which he recorded his impressions of forced labor in what is now Austria in minute detail and described his journey home across Europe. The office for Austro-French relations at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna headed by Michel Cullin plans to publish the text, which was translated by Jürgen Strasser.

Alpino Hat in Internment Camps

Alpino Hats in German Internment Camps is the title Jor Maso from Padua gave to his written account of his involuntary stay in Austria from 1944 to 1945. His story began when the German Wehrmacht quartered itself in Hotel Baglioni in Bologna, where he had been employed since he was 16. When late one evening a German officer arrived and demanded a room but was informed by Jor Maso that the hotel was full, the drunken soldier threateningly laid his pistol on the reception desk. On an impulse, Jor seized the weapon and pointed it straight in the officer's face. The ensuing shouting match was defused by the night porter and an interpreter who hurried to the scene, but a short time later Jor was arrested and deported to Vienna. He immediately tried to break out of the camp, succeeded on his second attempt and asked a nurse if she could help him find work as a baggage porter. She found him a job as a manservant with a Nazi official near Praterstern. After a brief period as an agricultural worker with the nurse's family, Jor returned to Vienna where he met a fellow Italian in an



Workbook of a forced laborer from Italy: first "guest workers," then "traitors."

Source: Paul Rachler

air raid shelter, who took him to Wilhelmsburg near St. Pölten. There, a female landowner employed him until he was arrested again and taken to an internment camp in Linz. From there, he was sent to an arms factory in Wilhelmsburg and after a mishap at the foundry was detailed to construct fortifications and entrenchments near Deutschkreutz in November 1944. In the evenings, he went from house to house, begging for food and bread. The Strobl family, who lived on Neubaugasse, initially invited him to chop wood for them, then to dinner and then to repeated visits to their home, which eventually resulted in the development of a friendship that could also have endangered the family. Every morning, soldiers marched the conscripts several kilometers to the construction site, even in deep snow. "There were thousands of us," he said in a video recording made almost sixty years later. "Professors, students, doctors, workers, women as well—it was like Dante's Inferno." When they passed the nearby Jewish camp, they sometimes saw terrible things: "Bodies stacked on top of one another, one or two hundred, a mountain of corpses."

Several times, Jor was locked up for simulating illness until he finally discovered what one really had to do in order to be credibly bed-ridden: smoke aspirin. The Strobl family sent food to his sick quarters. When he



received news that one of the Strobl sons had fallen in the war, he suffered with them "as if a close relative had died." Mother Strobl gave him wine, bread and lard when it was time to decamp again. He saw the end of the war in Ybbsitz while working for a mountain farmer, but instead of the Americans, as had been expected, it was the Soviets who came. Jor's statement saved the life of the farmer as a rabble of soldiers had already put a noose around his neck. By June, Jor was home again. He has lived in Venice since 1963. The day he was able to collect his payment from a Western Union partner bank in Venice, he and his son got into the car and drove to Austria, where they handed over a check for the entire amount to the Strobl family. "Deutschkreutz was a turning point in my life," he said. "One can never give too many thanks. But I say thank you how I can."

Rounded Up Like Escaped Animals

The deportation of Italians to Germany began in fall 1943 when the Germans were forced to retreat but did not want to leave valuable laborers behind for the approaching Allies. Later, laborers were taken from the north, where partisans had started to operate on the territory of the Nazi puppet state RSI (Italian Social Republic or Republic of Salò) and reprisals were taken in the form of raids to capture able-bodied individuals. Italian civilian prisoners in Austria were generally employed in the armaments industry in the areas around Linz, Graz, Kapfenberg, Wiener Neustadt, Spittal an der Drau, Kaprun and Innsbruck.

Former forced laborers now live in the USA, Canada and several Latin American countries, especially Argentina and Brazil, as well as in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and South Africa—most of them are East Europeans who have found a new home in these countries. However, they also include people who were born in Austria, the majority of them of Jewish descent. They will be dealt with in greater detail in another chapter. Grete D., now a resident of Montreal, is a Jewess from Vienna. She was forced to wash Schuschnigg government slogans supporting Austria's independence off the streets of her home city on her knees, before being able to illegally flee to Belgium and then emigrate abroad. Many of the



Sinti now living in the Federal Republic of Germany attempted to escape imprisonment in a concentration camp by fleeing to Switzerland, Italy, Hungary or one of the Balkan countries, but were captured and drafted into forced labor.

The Suffering of the Hungarian "Exchange Jews"

During World War II, Hungary, under its regent Admiral Miklos Horthy, was allied to Nazi Germany—the two countries united above all by a desire to overturn the treaties signed in Paris after World War I (in the case of Hungary, the Treaty of Trianon). Berlin did not therefore demand that Budapest supply any forced laborers, and even the Jews, while not free from harassment, were spared extermination for a time. However, the situation changed abruptly following the occupation of Hungary by the German Wehrmacht in April 1944. Of the 800,000 Jews living in Hungary at the time, 500,000 died a violent death. First, and above all with the energetic help of the police and military of the Arrow-Cross government that came into power, they were confined to ghettos and subsequently deported to extermination camps, the majority to Auschwitz, or to carry out forced labor. A plan was also drawn up to "exchange" thousands of Jews for vital war material, mainly trucks.

Until the implementation of the "people for trucks" scheme however, they were to work hard for the German wartime economy: in large-scale industries, but also in smaller companies in and around Vienna, in the southern districts of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and then above all on the construction of the South Eastern Defensive Wall, which was supposed to stop the Red Army at the borders with Styria and Burgenland. As the Soviet front moved closer however, work on the entrenchments and fortifications was halted and the Jews driven in droves toward Mauthausen. Nobody along their way who witnessed this procession of groaning, tortured people could ignore these death marches. The Austrian Historians' Commission appointed in 1998 was able to record the facts in precise detail and counted 55,000 Jewish victims, some 28,600 of whom perished on Austrian territory. The Roma were permitted to continue



eking out a living on the margins of society until Horthy (who had endeavored to maintain a degree of relative moderation) was arrested in October 1944. Efforts to accurately calculate the number of victims have failed on account of the illiteracy of many of the victims and witnesses.

How the Horror Can Grow

The L. family (mother Piroska, daughter Agnes and her brothers András and Mihály), who now live in the USA, kept detailed written records of its experiences. In a letter to relatives in Hungary in 1945, the mother was able to write, "we are now living in quite humane conditions in wooden huts in a forest of fir trees, 23 kilometers away from Vienna." "But the three weeks before in the ghetto and then in Strasshof (note: distribution camp) were terrible ... Could you at least send us 1,000 pengő, we don't have any money any more, and maybe some shoes and winter clothing?" In her next letter she asked for bacon, green peppers and "maybe a few gold coins or gold rings, just what's possible." But "a few plain biscuits, not with honey" would also have been welcome, and medicine of course, "lots of vitamin C, ointment to stop infections and to dry out wounds."

Her son András described his work at an airfield, building entrenchments and fortifications and laying drainpipes. "Every day we waited longingly for the air raid alarm because then we could take a rest in the forest." Once, after catching sight of a piano inside a house, András was able to play Mozart for half an hour. The elderly couple that owned the piano returned the favor with waltzes and Viennese folk songs: "Such lovely old people, we were very moved ... Could I have four pieces of soap please."

On May 15, 1944, the family was taken to the ghetto in Debrecen, and one month later deported to a brick factory. "Food was not the problem there, we supposedly also received food donations from Christian churches. The problem was, to put it politely, rather the opposite. There was only one country-style toilet for 12,000 people, in front of which embarrassed women would often wait for hours, and one latrine each for men and women, enclosed by a chest-high wall and with only one entrance. The



narrow path that separated the wall from a deep ditch was very dirty and slippery. Those who were unable to bear this state of affairs and the stench were often unable to relieve themselves for days..." When German officers came for inspection, everybody had to stand up straight. Anybody who was incapable of doing so had to crawl around on all fours and was beaten with a whip. "One young woman was beaten for four days until she finally confessed to having hidden a few valuables at her Aryan boyfriend's house."

In a Cattle Car to Strasshof

One day, the camp had to be evacuated for hygienic reasons. There was a long list of items that prisoners were forbidden to take with them: gold, money, jewelry, matches, candles, leather goods, writing material, alcoholic drinks, tea, coffee, thread, tins of food, windbreakers, fur-lined garments. Before departure, the universally feared baggage checks were carried out; generous overseers merely looked into the bags, others threw everything out so that the cases had to be packed again. Pillows, blankets, slippers, food all lay scattered on the field. The same ritual was repeated for days on end until finally everyone was driven to the railway station like a herd of sheep: a journey to the west! The cars were so crowded that nobody could stand up straight, but neither was it possible to sit. The car doors were not opened for two and a half days. They were only given water three times during the entire journey, 17 liters for 87 people. On one occasion, there was no water for 25 hours, on another a sympathetic Austrian rail worker went from car to car with jugs of water. "On the third day, we saw a large camp of wooden huts—if only they would let us out here! Some people were already crouching on corpses, which was why there was such a cadaverous stench," is what we read in the memoirs of the L. family. In fact, they had arrived at the Strasshof transit camp. The prisoners had to stand on the main camp road, their luggage was somewhere else, the camp gates were closed, the hut doors were not opened. The night was cold, the misery great. Friends searched for one another, finally moved indoors but were repeatedly chased outside again by Ukrainian overseers with sticks. Many people were forced to sleep outside. "They treated us Jews the way



Victim Categories in Austria

Members of many nationalities were made to carry out forced labor on Austrian territory under National Socialist rule. Their number also included men and women from Austria. They were perhaps the least talked-about group in the years after the defeat of the inhumane dictatorship. Perhaps it was easier to bear the memory, if that could be done at all, of the fate of foreign victims than it was to face up to the truth that in our midst our own people had robbed our own people of their human dignity! But "it is reasonable to expect people to face the truth," the Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachman clear-sightedly argued. The obvious thing to do would be to describe the victims from one's own people in terms of the various categories of victims, which, however, only partly existed in Austria. Consequently, they will only be referred to in headings for the time being, chapter 9 (The Many Faces of Tragedy) will deal with this issue in detail and explain under what circumstances those concerned were included in compensation schemes for forced laborers.

1. Jews, if they survived at all, were also humiliated by all kinds of work and later deported to extermination camps. Roma and Sinti were immediately

subjected to regimentation before being concentrated in "gypsy camps" (which in many cases were similar to concentration camps) or immediately deported to extermination camps. A total of 5,007 Austrian Roma died after being deported to Lodz in Poland (then known as Litzmannstadt) or were gassed at the extermination camp in Kulmhof.

2. Victims of Political Persecution were those individuals who openly opposed the regime and members of the resistance and whom the authorities were able to lay their hands on. Toward the end of the war, making jokes and listening to foreign radio broadcasts often sufficed as reasons for arrest.
3. So-called "submarines" were persons who were hidden to save them from certain death, for example Jews, Roma and Sinti living illegally in Austria. Hard farm labor was frequently the price they paid for concealment.
4. Religious Minorities such as Jehovah's Witnesses who rejected military service on principle were regarded by the regime as especially "unteachable." Most parents were sent straight to





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- concentration camps, the children put in homes or placed with "foster parents" where they were made to work hard.
5. Ethnic Minorities such as Slovenes or the Yenish were regarded as "natural" opponents under National Socialist racial ideology.
 6. Rassenschande (sexual relationships between Aryans and Jews or members of other races regarded as inferior by the Nazis) was punished by arrest, imprisonment or workhouse.
 7. Homosexuals were frequently sent to concentration camps immediately.
 8. Wehrmacht Deserters were regarded with suspicion for many years after the war and were excluded from all compensation schemes. They were frequently condemned to forced labor.
 9. Euthanasia Victims have terrible tales to tell about their exploitation as human guinea pigs in medical experiments.

cattle drivers treat other people's cattle, and the Jews were now almost no better than an unorganized herd, without any sense of community." When the chief rabbi and the president of the council of elders found a means of evading these tortures, the disappointment of the others knew no bounds. All those without a place of their own in the camp waited for others to die and vacate one. "We called the hospital the corpse factory, although the doctors there still did whatever they could to help people." After the unavoidable disinfections had been carried out, people were often left standing naked as the Ukrainian overseers stole their clothes.

Then the nightmare ended: back onto a train, but with only 50 people per car, room for luggage, the final destination being the work distribution camp in Vienna. "Here we were treated like human beings again, Viennese officials collected data, we would soon be able to work properly again." The shocking conclusion after all this inhumanity: "But looking back, we now know that our good fortune started when the train left the brick factory in Debrecen for Vienna. The next one went straight to Auschwitz."



An Easter Miracle? An Invisible Hand?

Many other forced laborers give similar accounts. Dov Tibor G. and his family also suffered at the brick factory in Debrecen in May 1944, and eventually even had to board a train to Auschwitz, where they would have met a certain death. However, after the locomotive was blown up during the journey, the transport was redirected to Strasshof. In December, Dov's older brother was detailed to construct entrenchments and fortifications in Vienna. However, as he was wounded and too weak, Dov volunteered to take his place, was separated from his family and forced to dig trenches in the frozen ground on the Italian border. After work, Dov frequently risked his life by walking off to collect snails or to beg potatoes or bread from local people. March 1945 saw the start of his march to Mauthausen and then to the Gunskirchen camp near Wels, where the prisoners finally arrived at the end of April in a state of total exhaustion and cruelly decimated—only a few days before the Americans. After liberation, Dov returned to Hungary and in 1946 emigrated to Israel. His physical and mental condition—extreme nervousness, aggressiveness, shyness, two children who were sick from birth—prevented him from living a fulfilling life until the very end. A legacy of a barbaric past.

From April 1944 onward, the Hungarian Jew János F. was forced to wear the yellow Jewish star. In June, he arrived in Strasshof in one of six trains that had been "bought" from the architect of the Final Solution, Adolf Eichmann, for one million dollars. Strasshof was bad enough, but "compared to the extermination camps, we were treated fairly well. And it is a fact," he wrote looking back, "that of the 21,000 Jews who were conscripted to forced labor via Strasshof, 75 percent survived." Prof. F. now lives in Brussels where he is the medical director of a renowned university institute of cancer research.

In September 1995, a memorial plaque was put up in Deutsch-Schützen in southern Burgenland to commemorate the 57 Jewish forced laborers who were shot and hastily buried there by Nazi henchmen in April 1945. Originally there were 120 people on the execution list, but the murderous order was revoked after 57 executions. This was one of thousands of cases in which an invisible hand played the role of inexplicable fate, so that 63



people could live on. Another Hungarian Jew, Zeiri M., was supposed to be withdrawn from building the South Eastern Defensive Wall in Deutsch-Schützen at the end of March 1945 and sent on a death march. "I was saved by the humane priest, dean Johann Farkas, who hid me." Perhaps an Easter miracle. For thousands of his fellow sufferers there was none.



›Why Such a Late Issue?‹

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A Powerful Longing for a New Start

In the first few years after the defeat of the Nazi regime and the hardship of the war years, the reconstituted democratic Republic of Austria was unable to bring itself to compensate former forced laborers. The interpretation of international law, according to which there had been no Austrian government between March 1938 and April 1945 capable of action and that therefore Austria was under no obligation under international law to make restitution for damages, was generally accepted. However, neither did those who had profited from the use of forced labor make any gesture of goodwill. As early as 1946, Simon Wiesenthal, at the time the president of the Linz-based Jewish Central Committee for the US zone in Austria, tried without success to obtain financial payments from those companies that had "borrowed" forced laborers from concentration camp administrations. In 1952, the government once again failed to act upon a Wiesenthal proposal to set up a fund to compensate foreign forced laborers. Typical of the arguments put forward by the companies concerned was a letter written by a privately-owned Austrian company in 1973 to an Israeli citizen, who had worked there as a concentration camp prisoner from the middle of 1944 until the end of the war and who had not received a penny in wages. The letter, which was published by Florian Freund in *Zwangsarbeit in Österreich 1939–1945* [Forced Labor in Austria 1939–1945] and Thomas Herko's doctoral thesis, states that, first of all, the factory had come under new ownership many years ago and was therefore no longer liable for earlier debts. Secondly, it was common knowledge that, like the supplicant in this particular case, "many thousands of people were persecuted on the grounds of race under the Nazi regime," something for which individual companies could not be made



Simon Wiesenthal (died September 20, 2005) was the first to suggest compensating forced laborers. Source: DÖW



responsible. Hundreds of thousands had also fallen victim to a "war that we had not wanted." "I can imagine your bitterness, but I believe that after 29 years an educated person should draw a line under the inglorious past" and not try to "cash in on the injustice."

Not all those who held similar views in those days expressed them so arrogantly. Nevertheless, it is a fact that this was a widely held opinion at the time: "We all had to suffer and make sacrifices in this war—it is impossible to indemnify everyone." Yes, it is true: Some people were the instigators of war and persecution, while others had to suffer because of it, for which reason not all victims had the same quality. But it was hard to convince those who had lost fathers, sons, husbands and friends in the Wehrmacht that pain on one side should somehow weigh less than the pain on the other. The longing for a new start unburdened by the past was both genuine and powerful and not merely prompted by a desire to distract from past guilt. The increasing tensions of the Cold War reinforced this tendency: Should one concentrate on the past when new challenges and dangers were emerging?

"Distanced Understanding" Does not Mean Approval

The experience after the collapse of the Communist system in Eastern Europe and after the fall of the Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic was very similar. After years of dreadful experiences with dictators and butchers, people longed for a new, unburdened future more than for a painstaking accounting for the recent past. In this connection, Salzburg historian Ernst Hanisch recommends that his colleagues adopt an attitude of "distanced understanding," by which, as he explains in his edited volume *Geschichte and Verantwortung* [History and Responsibility], he certainly does not mean an empathetic identification with National Socialists, but "understanding as the necessary prerequisite for any explanation" (p. 198).

Helene Maimann, the creator of several high quality documentaries for the education and contemporary events department of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF), said in an interview with the newspaper *Die*



Presse on June 2, 2004, that in 1945, both the victors and the vanquished had turned around and looked forward: "I believe that for a long time the survivors of World War II were psychologically incapable of talking about the immediate past. They all tried to rid themselves of the memories with silence." It was also an experience of that time "that it takes a generation to turn to face this hell again and to look into it."

This theory is supported by the fact that for a long time many victims did not want to break this silence. However, Italian Senator Vittorio Foa from Democrats of the Left was also right when he claimed, "We have to understand that there are attackers and the attacked, executioners and victims," and that "if possible we have to strike the weapon from the hand of the executioner." And that "being allowed to forget" remains "a privilege of the victim" as Austrian publicist Karl-Markus Gauss put it. It is also true that for many years Nazi "fellow-travellers" and even perpetrators contested the victims' exclusive right to this privilege. However, it is equally true that the sacrifice of those people whose labor was exploited under inhumane conditions on the territory of what is now the Republic of Austria was never completely forgotten.

Then one day, the "gap in their memories" (Günter Bischof) that many Austrians had sealed in order to make the leap from a bitter past into a new future, reopened. The "generation of grandchildren" found a different approach to this problem than the generation of their fathers who had been preoccupied with wiping the slate clean, and looking to reconstruction and the future. Sympathy gradually waned for a reduction of the problem of guilt to legal issues, no matter how clear these might be. An awareness of the difference between legal and moral responsibility grew, especially among the younger generation.

Historians Get to Work

Of course, one must also keep in mind the changes that had taken place in the social and political environment. In more than twenty countries, historians' commissions were charged with investigating the recent past—in



Reich Labor Service—an Exception

No Compensation for the Compulsory Service Rendered by All Young Germans

In accordance with a law passed by the government of the Reich on June 26, 1935, "all young Germans of both sexes" between the ages of 18 and 25 were obliged to perform "honorary service for the German people" for six months with the Reich Labor Service (RAD).

The stated purpose was to instill in them "a proper attitude to work, and above all a fitting respect for manual labor." In real terms, the RAD became the preliminary for military service.

These young people (with no exceptions for women after September 1939) were made to work on the construction of motorways, dam and irrigation projects, and also on the construction of military installations such as the Western Wall for a minimum wage. Given the universal nature of this conscription, neither the German foundation nor the Austrian Reconciliation Fund envisaged compensation for forced labor in the RAD.

Following the occupations of Alsace-Lorraine and Luxembourg by German troops, these regions became part of the German Reich, as a result of which this legislation also applied to their inhabitants. Consequently, individuals who had been deported to other parts of the Reich

and kept like prisoners were entitled to apply for compensation.

In volume 26/2 of the work by Stefan Karner and Peter Ruggenthaler on forced labor in the agricultural sector on the territory of present-day Austria, the Luxembourger Pierre Fah describes how in 1943, when he was 18 years old, he was conscripted into the Reich Labor Service and brought to the province of Salzburg.

He and his fellow countrymen were housed in barracks in Lofer at a test station for the German Navy and the Luftwaffe. At temperatures which fell to minus 31 degrees Celsius, they were forced to dig ditches, lay pipelines and set up masts, for which they received a quarter of a Reichsmark per day as wages and "potatoes with cabbage and cumin seeds" for their regular meal. They also received an extra punishment because they had only donated one Reichsmark each to a collection for the Nazi children's charity, Kinderhilfswerk. In early 1944, the Luxembourgers were permitted to return home, but only ten days later were conscripted into the Wehrmacht. None of them returned from a brief period of leave in mid-1944, for which they were all arrested by the Gestapo and sentenced to death. Sixteen were shot; Pierre Fah

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survived because his files were destroyed in an air raid. Although the compensation is not a large sum in Luxembourg today, he applied for it because he "had not gone to Salzburg voluntarily."

Austria on October 1, 1998, by the government of Chancellor Klima and Vice Chancellor Schüssel and the presidents of the Nationalrat Fischer, Neisser and Brauneder. This commission was set up as an independent body of experts headed by Clemens Jabloner, president of the Administrative Court, and its remit included a study of the issue of forced labor in Austria. This, of course, does not mean that Austrian historians had not examined this topic prior to the establishment of the Jabloner Commission. In 1991, Florian Freund and Bertrand Perz had written about Foreign Laborers and Concentration Camp Prisoners in the Ostmark in Ulrich Herbert's edited volume *Europa und der Reichseinsatz* [Europe and Deployment in the Reich]. Herbert had started publishing on this subject in 1984. Freund had already written about the *Arbeitslager Zement (KZ-Nebenlager Ebensee und Raketenrüstung)* [Labor Camp Cement—Missiles and the Satellite Concentration Camp at Ebensee] in 1989, and in 1991 had written about the Quarz Project (the Social Democratic Party and Melk concentration camp). The Historians' Commission was, therefore, able to directly draw upon the valuable pioneering work of these scholars.

The historians' work was also made easier by the opening of archives that had been closed up to then. The Soviet Union, which had all too frequently accused forced laborers of collaboration with the Nazi dictatorship, particularly if the individuals concerned had left the country "voluntarily," had remained silent about the issue of forced laborers during the entire Communist period. Moscow never expressed any criticism or made any demands. Under these circumstances, could Germany and Austria have been expected to make an issue of the subject voluntarily when they were confronted with demands from other victims' groups? Moreover, for ideological reasons, the Communist system had no sympathy for the idea of compensating individuals. The Soviet Union felt that it had been harmed as a state and demanded reparations. Under international law, only states are entitled to reparations and the decision whether, and to what extent,



In 1998, the Austrian government established a historians' commission to examine the history of the Nazi period in greater detail (from left to right: Georg Graf, Bertrand Perz, Alice Teichova, Karl Stuhlpfarrer, Robert Knight, Roman Sandgruber, Lorenz Mikoletzky, Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, Clemens Jabloner [chairman]).

Source: APA Images/Barbara Gindl

individual citizens will be permitted to share in them, is at the sole discretion of the state concerned. The collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989 also brought about a change with regard to this issue.

A New Legal Situation

It was not until the early 1990s that a peace treaty was signed with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and its Communist counterpart, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), in which the issue of reparations could be addressed. No peace treaty could be concluded with the Republic of Austria, because no Austrian government had ever declared war on any of the Allied states that were victorious in 1945. The relevant passage of the indictment against the major war criminals at the Nuremberg Tri-



bunal referred to the "occupation" of Austria by Nazi Germany. In 1955 therefore, only the four main Allies, the USA, the USSR, Great Britain and France, concluded a "State Treaty" with Austria concerning the restoration of full national sovereignty—for a peace treaty, on the other hand, negotiations with all the states that had participated in the war would have been necessary. The protocols of the 84th legislative period of the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate therefore correctly pointed out that no peace treaty would be concluded with Austria: "Our nation was never at war with Austria."

With regard to Germany, a new legal situation was created with the signing of the so-called Two + Four Treaty on September 12, 1990, on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany. In this treaty, the two German states (Two) and the four victorious powers (Four) recalling the United Nations Charter, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed in Helsinki, and "the fact that the German people, freely exercising their right of self-determination have expressed their will to bring about the unity of Germany as a state" agreed that the two German states that had been torn apart after 1945 would be united "with full sovereignty over ... internal and external affairs." The reunited Germany at the same time reaffirmed its "renunciation of the manufacture and possession of and control over nuclear, biological and chemical weapons," undertook not to assert any territorial claims whatsoever against other states, not to conduct any wars of aggression and to limit the personnel strength of its armed forces to 370,000. In exchange, Germany received the right to freely choose its military allegiances and an undertaking that the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the former GDR would be completed by no later than 1994. The London Debt Agreement of 1953, which allowed the Federal Republic of Germany to re-establish its role on the international capital markets, had referred reparation claims and thus also all individual claims of former forced laborers to a future peace treaty. If individual companies were approached with requests to pay remuneration to their erstwhile forced laborers, they could argue: "no peace treaty—no obligation." Now however, something like a peace treaty had been signed—the German Constitutional Court also ruled that the Two + Four Treaty represented a kind of substitute peace treaty with Germany. This once again made the question of compensation an issue under international law.



Leading members of the Austrian government and the foreign ministers of the signatory powers following the signing of the State Treaty at Belvedere Palace in Vienna on May 15, 1955. This treaty returned full sovereignty to Austria.

Source: APA Images/Erich Lessing

With respect to Austria, which was not covered by the London Debt Agreement, the State Treaty of 1955 continued to apply, Article 21 of which clearly stipulates that "No reparation shall be exacted from Austria arising out of the existence of a state of war in Europe after 1 September, 1939." The Soviet Union had dropped its original demand for 250 million dollars in reparations at the meeting of foreign ministers in Paris in 1949, and it was agreed that the Allies would only be entitled to claim German assets located in Austria. The three Western Allies voluntarily refrained from doing so, whereas the Soviet Union did not. Under the terms of the State Treaty, Austria therefore had to make redemption payments. Legally, however, the line of argument has not been shaken to the present-day: no Austrian government capable of acting = no shared guilt for the war and acts of war = no legal right to compensation from the Austrian state. However, the new mood in Austria could no longer be ignored: humanity and justice cannot only be measured against the letter of a law!



And of Course, the Class Action Suits



German Chancellor Helmut Kohl sought a generous solution from the outset.

Source: Hopi-Media/Martha Hermann

It would be disingenuous to underestimate the importance of the class action suits launched in the USA in any debate about why it took so long for the compensation of forced laborers to become the subject of serious discussion in the countries concerned. These suits were preceded by individual efforts on the part of German companies to do something for erstwhile foreign conscripted laborers. On New Years 1993, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had also given one billion marks to fund Russian searches for surviving forced laborers. Soon, foundations were established for this purpose in Poland, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Social Democrats, but especially the Green

Party, put pressure on the German and European parliaments. As early as 1989, a fact-finding committee of the German Bundestag examined the issue. Chancellor Kohl, who had demonstratively done much for the Jewish victims of National Socialism and also supported the return of assets that had been confiscated in the former GDR, rejected payments for foreign conscripted laborers on the grounds that East European agricultural workers had helped with the German harvest for generations and so had not regarded their employment during the Nazi period as anything unusual. Neither, he argued, had Germany ever received compensation for the millions of civilians and soldiers who had been deported to the Soviet Union, who had all had to perform hard labor there and half of whom had died. Notwithstanding these arguments, however, the Federal Republic of Germany paid 1.5 billion deutsche marks for humanitarian assistance to reconciliation foundations in Belarus, the Czech Republic, Poland, Russia and Ukraine in the early 1990s.

Switzerland: "If Money Talks..."

However, in the USA, lawyers decided that the time had come for more vigorous action: first of all in Switzerland, then in Germany and then in Austria. As early as 1962, the Swiss parliament had instructed the country's banks to examine dormant accounts from the Nazi period and to satisfy the claims of the original account holders or their heirs. Some 7,000 applications were examined, but the majority rejected. Of the ten million Swiss francs that were discovered in dormant accounts, 3.8 million were paid out—neither the owners of the remainder nor their heirs were found. But now, books started to be published about the matter and the pressure of Jewish organizations upon Switzerland to admit its wrongdoing during the Nazi period grew. Following a major report in the *Wall Street Journal*, the Swiss Bankers Association called upon the financial institutions to examine their accounts again. The media also vociferously reminded the public that looted Nazi gold had also found its way into the vaults of the Swiss National Bank.



US Under Secretary of State Stuart E. Eizenstat found an understanding and competent negotiating partner in the special representative of the Austrian government, Maria Schaumayer.

Source: Hopi-Media/Bernhard J. Holzner

Forced Labor under International Law

How Does International Law Judge the Offence of Forced Labor?

1. The Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land of 1907 and the Geneva Convention of 1929 regulate the waging of war and the conduct of victors in the occupation of defeated countries. These laws apply in their full scope to the belligerents in World War II.
2. According to Article 52 of the Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land, a victorious power may demand requisitions in kind and services from communes and inhabitants, but only to meet the necessities of the army of occupation and these may only be demanded on the authority of the Commander in the locality occupied. International law prohibits the conscription of the entire or even a large part of the civilian population of an occupied territory for labor.
3. The prohibition of forced labor was also included in the Geneva Convention of 1929 and reaffirmed in 1949. An explicit ban on the deportation of civilians for assignment to forced labor was only formulated in the Geneva Convention of 1949 and had not been applicable prior to this date.
4. The Convention Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor of the International Labor Organisation of 1930 defined forced labor as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily."
5. The judgment of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal in 1946 ruled that forced labor was a violation of international law, for which not the state, but the individuals acting in its name were to be held responsible: "The policy of forced labor was a violation of Article 52 of the Hague Convention and thus a crime against humanity."
6. Reparations that may be agreed or imposed are payable for crimes under international law committed while waging war. The rights and obligations arising from them may only be asserted between the states and not by individuals.
7. Beside the threat of punishment in the case of refusal and the use of discriminatory labor legislation, the distinguishing feature of National Socialist forced labor was the absence of economic necessity: people were conscripted solely on the grounds of their nationality, ethnicity or religion.



Stuart E. Eizenstat, who provides a detailed account in his book *Imperfect Justice*, scoffed that, "if money talks, the Swiss heard it first." Incidentally, neither does Eizenstat mince his words about some Jews, of whose behavior he was also critical: because Israel wanted to attract as many Jews as possible, its government never strongly attempted to obtain compensation for Jews in other countries. However, what he found most annoying was the rivalry between various Jewish organizations (*Imperfect Justice* page 41). In 1997–98 following a wave of class action lawsuits against Switzerland, hectic negotiations were conducted (in their final phase with great brutality) that led to an agreement in August 1998. A total of 1.25 billion dollars would be paid by various Swiss sources as compensation to surviving victims or their heirs for assets expropriated during World War II. This amount also included 1,000 dollars each for surviving slave laborers who had either worked for Swiss companies in Germany (a total of 11,000 individuals) or for German companies who had deposited their income at Swiss banks. The fact that not a single franc of this money had been paid out three years later increased the tension in the public debate and the political pressure. The search for claimants throughout the world proved to be as laborious as the establishment of the legal peace that was demanded from the USA in exchange. The Swiss government also firmly refused to become involved in this settlement, which in turn angered the Americans.

Germany: "No Lofty, Self-Righteous View"

The settlement with the Swiss banks, of course, had a critical influence on the debate in Germany. In March 1998, US lawyers filed class action suits against Ford Motor Company and its German subsidiary Ford Werke on behalf of Jewish and non-Jewish victims of National Socialism. In June, class action suits were brought against Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank, soon to be followed by suits against more than a dozen large German corporations with subsidiaries in the USA. Other companies pleaded that they had reached compensation agreements with the Jewish Claims Conference (in some cases that also covered victims in East Germany) between 1958 and 1966 in exchange for which the Conference had prom-



ised not to support further claims in the future. Nevertheless, individual German corporations such as Volkswagen and Siemens now established private funds for forced laborers.

A strategy meeting of representatives of twelve major German corporations in August 1998 at the Federation of German Industries gave a strong political impetus. "Germany clearly was not Switzerland," wrote Stuart Eizenstat looking back, and "most important, the new generation of Germans did not hold a lofty, self-righteous view of themselves." (page 213) The new German government under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder appointed his chief of staff Bodo Hombach as government special representative to negotiate the endowment of two funds with his US counterpart Stuart Eizenstat. A Remembrance and Responsibility foundation would make payments to surviving victims, while a Future Fund would finance projects to promote social justice and remind people of the threat posed by totalitarianism.

In February 1999, Chancellor Schröder and 16 captains of industry announced that a foundation would be set up to compensate forced laborers in order to "counter law suits, particularly class action suits, and to remove the bases of the campaign being led against German industry and our country." Schröder's words enraged the US lawyers. Prior to this, Eizenstat had had difficulty persuading the Germans to include representatives of East European states in the negotiations. To the surprise of some observers, Hombach upheld the argument of the previous government with regard to agricultural workers, that they had always come to work in Germany. According to Eizenstat, further negotiations revealed to the Americans "a mixture of candor and morality with cold pragmatism" on the part of German industry.

Ten Billion Marks Underneath the Christmas Tree

Major problems arose when it came to ascertaining how many former forced laborers were still alive. Finally, Professor Lutz Niethammer, a German historian and friend of Hombach, organized a group of experts in



Florence who arrived at the following "definitive estimates." Roughly 1.5 million former forced laborers were assumed to be still alive; 670,000 of these had been employed in industry, 590,000 in agriculture and a further 240,000 had been kept as slave laborers under concentration camp conditions. This was then followed by hard bargaining concerning the total amount of compensation to be paid. "Under no circumstances" did the Germans want to agree to the "compromise sum" of ten billion marks demanded by Eizenstat, while the lawyers were adamant in their refusal to accept less than eleven billion. US President Bill Clinton wrote letter after letter to Chancellor Schröder, the promise of future legal peace was repeatedly strengthened, the new German negotiator Count Otto Lambdorff, who had been appointed in July 1999, proved to be a master of flexibility when necessary—and agreement was reached. Ten billion German marks were placed under the Christmas tree in 1999, with the state and industry providing five billion each. In exchange, the withdrawal or dismissal of the class action suits was agreed in an executive agreement between the German and US governments. Even before implementation of this agreement could be started, those in positions of responsibility in Austria had decided that they neither wanted to nor could they afford to stand aside and gloat over the situation in Germany.

Poland Creates an Impulse in Austria

At the turn of the year 1996–1997, representatives of an Association of Poles wronged by the Third Reich came to Vienna to meet the second president of the Nationalrat, Heinrich Neisser, and representatives of Austrian industry in an effort to obtain an undertaking that compensation would be given to Polish forced laborers. The organization backed up its claims with numbers showing how many forced laborers were still alive and provided the names of companies in Austria for whom they had worked. Russia also made enquiries regarding this subject. While Neisser showed a great deal of understanding, the government and parliament as a whole were still reserved. Like many others with Christian Democratic political convictions in Austria, Neisser had for many years maintained an active relationship with the Polish historian and publicist Wladislaw



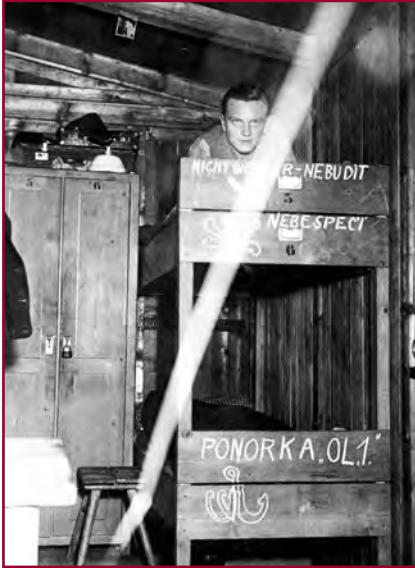
**Second President of the Nationalrat
Heinrich Neisser tried to reach a solution
in the 1990s.**

Source: Hopi-Media

Bartoszewski, who from 1990 to 1995 had served as newly liberated Poland's first ambassador to Austria and who in 1995 and 2000–2001 had twice held the post of Polish foreign minister.

Heinrich Neisser proposed an amendment to the National Fund Act that would have made it possible to compensate forced laborers. The National Fund of the Republic of Austria was set up in 1995 to compensate Austrians who had been persecuted by the Nazi regime, irrespective of the reason, with a lump-sum payment of 70,000 schillings (5,080 euro). In order to qualify, claimants had to have been resident in Austria in 1938 and must not have received

compensation under any other program. The attempt to include forced laborers in the fund failed, with the government arguing that it was the responsibility of the companies concerned and not the state. However, at a meeting on October 1, 1998, between Chancellor Viktor Klima, Vice Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel and the president of the Nationalrat, Heinz Fischer, and his deputy Heinrich Neisser, it was agreed that a Historians' Commission would be appointed and this then included the issue of forced laborers in its remit. In October 1998, the media-hungry US lawyer Edward Fagan filed a claim for damages against Bank Austria Creditanstalt (BA-CA) for transactions carried out by the bank's predecessors during the Nazi period. A settlement concluded in 1999 included compensation for forced laborers. Also in October, Fagan and his Munich-based partner Michael Wittl, together with other US lawyers, filed class action suits against Vereinigte Österreichische Eisen- und Stahlwerke (VÖEST)/Alpine (VA) and Steyr-Daimler-Puch. Other class action suits followed in 2000, as did a "global suit" against the Republic of Austria and some 80 Austrian companies. Led by the chairman of the management board of VA Stahl, Wolfgang Eder, well-known Austrian industrial companies



The "Lebensraum" of forced laborers at a factory in Graz.

Source: Museli pracovat pro Risi/Arhiv CNFB

indicated their willingness to participate in a comprehensive Austrian solution, which would eliminate the unresolved problem of compensation for forced laborers once and for all. These companies had consulted the historian Oliver Rathkolb. Corporate lawyer Michael Kutschera agreed with him, to the effect that a comprehensive Austrian solution would be desirable. Although nobody believed the class action suits would be successful, there was unanimous agreement that the resulting international public debate would harm the exports of the companies concerned. This group would have preferred to have seen the inclusion of BA-CA in such a comprehensive solution rather than

the settlement that had been reached. Even before the appointment of the Historians' Commission, the spokesman of the management board of Österreichische Elektrizitätswerke AG (Verbund), Hans Haider, had hired the historians Oliver Rathkolb and Florian Freund to carry out a study of the employment of forced laborers in the electricity industry (Ennskraftwerke, Kaprun, Donaukraftwerke, Ybbs-Persenbeug-Ernsthofen, Vienna), which was published in 2002.

Lawsuits as a Form of Political Intimidation

A class action suit is a device in US law that allows a specific plaintiff to bring a claim as a representative of a large group of people, or "class" who, given the same circumstances, would be entitled to assert the same claim. If one multiplies the amount of compensation sought by the plaintiff by the number of possible other claimants, then one arrives at the frequently astronomical amounts that cause such agitation when class action suits



are filed. In a radio interview with Mitteldeutsche, Westdeutsche and Österreichische Rundfunk, which was broadcast by ORF on June 1, 2002, Wolfgang Gibowski, spokesperson of the Foundation initiative set up by German industry, said, "the idea of these class actions is in reality to threaten the defendant to such an extent that in the end he agrees to a compromise fairly quickly, because this threat makes it simpler, cheaper and less time consuming to agree to a compromise than to see the whole thing through, even if in the end he were to win."

Hans Winkler, head of the International Law Department at the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained these arguments with regard to the specific case in greater detail in his chapter of *Die politische Ökonomie des Holocaust*:

- » Most class action suits are compiled cutting and pasting texts from previous suits that often concern completely different issues.
- » There is an extensive or complete lack of reference to specific legal foundations for the suit—which is certainly within the meaning of the definition of class action suits, which must be based upon "facts or law."
- » However, according to Winkler, the historic, political and international legal "facts" contained in the petitions were "downright adventurous, incorrect, distorted or irrelevant." In the cases under discussion here, for example, Austria's situation under international law, which could not be compared with that of Germany, was never taken into account and it was, amongst other things, asserted that Austria's government had since 1933 conspired with Nazi Germany to achieve a transfer of power—notwithstanding the fact that in 1934 the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss was shot dead in an attempted Nazi coup, and government resistance was wrestled down in 1938 by the invasion of German troops.
- » In none of these petitions was evidence presented, as the US legal system does not require it at this stage.
- » Both the class of claimants and the class of the defendants remain subject to estimate at best. A small number are named, others are listed as



a group—they will be tracked down during the course of the procedure. This leads to great uncertainty.

- » The principle of international law that affords immunity to states from actions by other states is only viewed from the perspective of exceptions as specified in the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act of 1976. This act permits claims to be made against states that pursue commercial activities in the USA (commercial activities exception), and secondly, in the case of violations of international law, particularly in connection with human rights and the forfeiture of property (non-commercial torts exception).
- » It was a particular nicety that of the 16 class action suits that had been filed against Austria by the time the negotiations that followed had been completed, only one had been delivered in due form. All the others had been filed at court, but only delivered by mail which was impermissible.

Not one of these 16 class action suits was heard, let alone decided. It was justified to assume that these suits had little chance of success, as they were non-justiciable political questions, which came under the jurisdiction of the political and not the judicial branch. Furthermore, a series of international treaties had referred reparation claims in connection with the use of forced laborers to the erstwhile German companies. Nevertheless, like Bern and Berlin before it, Vienna drew clear conclusions:

- » In view of the complexity of the US legal system, it could not be guaranteed that all suits would be dismissed.
- » A continued polemical discussion before a world audience would not only harm the export interests of the companies concerned, it would also damage the image of the entire country.
- » Austria's willingness to accept a moral responsibility over and above its legal obligations (which had also been shown in public opinion surveys) should be demonstrated not only in the form of fine speeches on the part of the highest representatives of the state, but also by a visible and radical gesture of goodwill.



CHAPTER 6

›The State and the Business
Community Remember‹

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Political Turnaround in Austria

In May 2000, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) and the Austrian Federation of Industry (IV) established a working group called Platform Humanitarian Action. However, the representatives of the business community had in fact started making preparations much earlier. Open-minded entrepreneurs aware of developments on the international stage and their representatives had already reached the conclusion a year earlier that the debate about compensation for forced laborers that was raging in Switzerland and Germany would inevitably spread to Austria. Moreover, they also believed that the time had come to finally confront this issue. The Federal Economic Chamber was represented by its president Christoph Leitl, who entrusted his deputy secretary general, Manfred Gründler, with responsibility for dealing with this topic and the Federation of Industry by its honorary president, Heinz Kessler, who at the time was also chairman of the Industry Section of the Federal Economic Chamber. Under Austrian law, membership in the Federal Economic Chamber is mandatory for all entrepreneurs, while the Federation of Industry is an important association of entrepreneurs and managers from industry with voluntary membership. The involvement of these organizations ensured a genuinely representative participation of all those active in Austrian trade and industry in resolving this important issue. In 1999, the Federation of Industry had set up Platform Forced Labor headed by the managing director of VÖEST-Alpine AG, Wolfgang Eder, which originally envisaged Austrian participation in the planned German foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future. It stood to reason that it would be difficult to achieve a careful separation of jurisdictions for former forced laborers who had been recruited by the German Reich and deployed on both German and Austrian territory, many of them at times in both countries. As the conclusion of the German-American negotiations on this issue grew closer, the possibility of a joint solution gradually faded. The negotiating partners evidently did not want to wait for a new partner to come on board late in the day. On the other hand, Vienna was worried that the Americans would reach an agreement with the Germans and then prescribe a "Swiss Solution" for the Austrians: no bilateral agreement with the government guaranteeing legal peace, rather the resolution of disputes through the law courts.



That suggested bilateral negotiations between Austria and the United States of America. However, prior to October 1999, Austria found itself in almost perpetual election mode followed by negotiating stress once the elections were held on October 3. Moreover, the elections produced a sensational result. The Social Democratic Party's (SPÖ) share of the vote fell from 38.1 to 33.1 percent, that of its coalition partner, the People's Party (ÖVP), from 28.3 to 26.9 percent, while that of the opposition Freedom Party (FPÖ) rose also to 26.9 percent, but with 415 more votes than the ÖVP. For weeks, the SPÖ and ÖVP engaged in negotiations to continue their collaboration in government, but without success. The grand coalition that after 1945 had governed Austria for more than 20 years and that had been revived 14 years earlier, finally proved to be immune to resuscitation. Nevertheless, it came as a surprise when on January 25, 2000, ÖVP Chairman Wolfgang Schüssel entered into coalition negotiations with the FPÖ and announced on February 1 that a coalition agreement had been reached.

Rapid Agreement Concerning Forced Laborers

At this point in time, political observers did not really expect rapid negotiations about compensation for former forced laborers. After all, the Freedom Party had strong German Nationalist roots, and although in recent years there had been a move toward Austrian nationalism, there had been no turn toward internationalism. Prominent party figures, above all party chairman Jörg Haider, had also attracted attention with their efforts to woo the right-wing fringe of the political spectrum. Could one expect that a governing party of this kind would find a solution for forced laborers when no other previous coalition had been able to bring itself to do so? One could. On January 28, only a few days after the parties commenced negotiations to form a new government, it was announced that the People's Party and the Freedom Party had agreed to work out an objective solution in which industry would also participate in an appropriate form.

On February 4, the government under chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel and Vice Chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer from the FPÖ was sworn in



Former Polish forced laborers leaving Austria: this hardship ended for them in 1945.

Source: DÖW

by the President, amidst fierce domestic and international protests. These dragged on for months and led to the other 14 EU member states downgrading their diplomatic contacts with the 15th member, Austria. These "sanctions" were intended to isolate Austria for having included a right-wing party frequently described as xenophobic in government and force it to renounce this coalition. The sanctions failed to achieve their goal, but were only lifted in September 2000 as the feared deterioration in official policy toward foreigners and minorities did not materialize.

Certainly, this international outrage played a major part in the decision to precede the coalition agreement between the ÖVP and FPÖ with a preamble signed by Wolfgang Schüssel and Jörg Haider on February 3, in which they expressed a clear commitment to democracy, human rights and the European Union and promised that, "as regards forced labor under the National Socialist regime, the Federal Government will endeavor to arrive at objective solutions in the light of the intermediate report by the Austrian commission of historians." The new chancellor repeated this undertaking in an address to the Austrian Parliament on February 9, 2000,



and also defined those groups for whom efforts would be made to obtain compensation:

- » former forced laborers;
- » former Austrian prisoners of war (a separate law was subsequently created for them to disconnect their problem from that of the forced laborers); and
- » Germans who had been expelled from the former Czechoslovakia (Benes Decrees) and the former Yugoslavia (Avnoj Decrees) to Austria (for whom no willing negotiating partner had yet been found)

The Time Was Ripe for a Settlement

The inclusion of the latter two groups had mainly been demanded by the FPÖ, but the party's unreserved agreement to compensate forced laborers was the greater political concession. Chancellor Schüssel regarded the fact that the idea of a compensation fund was first raised in public by FPÖ Vice Chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer as a "symbol" of the new coalition partner's "ability to learn." The efforts of both parties of the new governing coalition to put an end to international criticism caused by fears of xenophobia and certainly facilitated a rapid agreement on compensation for forced laborers. However, had the SPÖ-ÖVP coalition been reconstituted, it also would certainly have had to have found a solution to this issue.

Many formulations agreed upon by the new government were adopted from a draft coalition agreement between the SPÖ and ÖVP, although this was never signed (even if only to make things more difficult for the Social Democratic opposition). One of these was the following paragraph: "The Federal Government is committed to a self-critical scrutiny of the National Socialist past. It will ensure unreserved clarification, exposure of the structures of injustice, and the transmission of this knowledge to coming generations as a warning for the future. As regards the question of forced labor under the National Socialist regime, the Federal Government

Knowledge of History

In discussing the future of our young people we must equip them with something essential, namely a knowledge of the history of their country. Austria's past demands particularly critical involvement with this aspect and the necessary sensitivity for the unjust structures and mechanisms of the National Socialist system. It is this knowledge and sensitivity that we must pass on to the future generations as a warning. During the past few years, several very important steps have been taken in this direction.

In the light of the preliminary report issued by the Austrian Historians' Commission, the Federal Government must now provide rapid compensation to the victims of forced labor during the Nazi regime, taking into account the responsibility of the enterprises concerned. The

new Government will ensure that former forced laborers, who are now of an age in which they urgently need help, get their rights.

Yesterday I received an assurance that the new Special Representative of the Austrian Federal Government who will deal with these issues comprehensively and competently, fully equipped with an infrastructure at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the full support of all members of this Government, will be the former Governor or President of the Austrian National Bank, Maria Schaubmayer. She will do a good job with the necessary sensitivity. I strongly appeal for your co-operation.

*Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel
in his Inaugural Speech
on February 9, 2000*

will endeavor to arrive at objective solutions in the light of the intermediate report by the Austrian commission of historians, while having regard to the primary responsibility of the companies concerned."

The reference to the "primary responsibility of the companies concerned" is based on the consideration that the post-World War II Austrian economy was also able to build upon the work of those men and women who, against their will, had kept many companies in operation during the Nazi period. The economic situation in Austria after the Anschluss was signifi-



cantly different than that of Nazi Germany. Austria's industries were far less developed, so that massive investments in modernization were initially required, especially in the primary and armaments industries. Consequently, Austria lacked a core workforce. Austrians looking for work soon found jobs, but the need for additional labor quickly became apparent after the outbreak of war. Forced laborers therefore contributed significantly in these years to the industrialization of Austria, which also benefited the country in the post-war period of reconstruction.

Factories, Infrastructure and Agriculture

The generalization contained in this statement did not go completely uncontradicted. "The real capital that had been built up was scattered in the rain of bombs, dismantling and other losses," argued Roman Sandgruber, professor of Economic and Social History at the University of Linz and a member of the commission of historians in an article in the newspaper *Die Presse* on August 29, 1998. "The industrialization of Austria, frequently attributed to the National Socialist period by the Austrians, is in reality a result of the first post-war decade." Of course, it is beyond dispute that in many cases it was easier to reconstruct factories that had been destroyed than it would have been to start from scratch with no prior labor performance or experience. It must also be remembered that in the war years, forced laborers were heavily employed in road and railway construction and the creation and improvement of the entire infrastructure, not just in factories. Nowhere near all that they had constructed was destroyed again by enemy action.

It is impossible to ignore the work of foreign conscripted laborers in the agricultural sector who were forced to carry out hard labor on many farms where the fathers, sons and farm workers had been called up into the Wehrmacht. It was also thanks to these foreign forced laborers that the Austrian population was spared a life-threatening food shortage in the final phase of the war. In the post-war years, when everybody was struggling with their own problems and difficulties, it hardly occurred to the Austrians to publicly recognize this achievement without being able to



Forced labor in the agricultural sector could prove advantageous in terms of food and accommodation, but also offered opportunities for especially humiliating forms of abuse.

Source: Propaganda book "Europa – arbeitet in Deutschland"/Zentralverlag der NSDAP 1943

retroactively "compensate for" or legalize it. However, there was now an increasing sense that at least some form of recognition and a small material gesture ought to be given in recompense. More than half a century after the end of Nazi rule and World War II, government and industry were unanimous in their agreement on this issue, and there were no popular objections that would have made it difficult for them. A number of opinion polls showed that a majority of the Austrian population supported this willingness to make symbolic recompense. While researching his doctoral thesis, Thomas Herko, author of *Die Frage der ehemaligen Zwangsarbeiter unter nationalsozialistischem Regime auf dem Gebiet der heutigen Republik Österreich*, quoted earlier, interviewed representatives of all those political parties represented in parliament. Parliamentary Group Leader Andreas Khol, now president of the Nationalrat, expressed the opinion that a Social Democratic-Christian Democratic government would also have tackled the problem, but that if Viktor Klima were chancellor, he would not have pursued a solution with the same degree of urgency as Chancellor Schüssel. The former second president of the Nationalrat, Hein-



rich Neisser, also noted the original reluctance of the circle surrounding Klima, attributing it to the concern of a number of politicians that *Neue Kronenzeitung*, by far the biggest selling tabloid newspaper in the country, might make life difficult for any politician who became involved with the issue by launching a populist campaign (when the situation actually arose, the paper did not do so). A Green member of parliament, Terezija Stoitsits, said she thought that every Austrian government would have faced up to the "signs of the time," while FPÖ Chairman Herbert Haupt said that only the new government had been able to break the deadlock of the former government constellation.

Maria Schaumayer Receives a Government Mandate

Whoever was right with their assumptions, the new government single-mindedly, determinedly and effectively seized the opportunity to raise its profile in order to assuage certain international fears. Chancellor Schüssel was already able to introduce the Government's special representative in his inaugural statement, a woman who would apply herself to the negotiations with a high level of energy and commitment. Maria Schaumayer, who holds a doctorate in economic sciences, had already gained a great deal of practical experience working in industry and banking before she moved into regional politics, becoming a member of the Vienna Landtag and also the Viennese City Administration (City Senate). She was subsequently appointed to the management board of the Austrian oil giant OMV, where she served as chief financial officer, and finally gained respect in both Austria and abroad during her five-year term as the president (this function would now be called governor) of the Austrian National Bank. She was repeatedly under discussion for the positions of both Austrian president and chancellor and had in fact turned down an offer from Schüssel to serve as chancellor. Her public image was that of a highly professional woman with sound political instincts, who knew how to combine personal charm with toughness when necessary. Maria Schaumayer had already been retired for five years when the Republic called upon her again. She accepted Chancellor Schüssel's invitation to become the Government's special representative because, as she said, she wanted to thank the Republic of



On February 15, 2000, Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel presented the former governor of the National Bank, Maria Schaumayer, as the chief negotiator for fair compensation for forced laborers.

Source: Hopi-Media/Bernhard J. Holzner

Austria one more time for having offered her "such great opportunities" in life. Chancellor Schüssel and Vice Chancellor Riess-Passer presented Schaumayer in her new function to the public at a press conference held on February 15, where all three made it clear that:

- » In order to close a "sad chapter" in Austria's history, an "Austrian solution" would be sought for the issue of compensation for former forced laborers on Austrian territory, instead of participating in the German foundation. A joint solution with Germany would have sent the wrong message, as if Austria had in fact waged war as an independent state alongside Nazi Germany. A separate Austrian solution would "certainly not be bad for the victims." In retrospect, this assertion has been impressively confirmed.
- » In view of the advanced age of the surviving former slave and forced laborers, a solution would have to be found quickly and it would have to be explicable in every detail, so that new disappointments would not dash the hopes of the victims.



- » An extra-judicial solution would be sought to ensure that nobody would be referred to a frequently lengthy and complicated legal process with their claims. To this end, discussions would also be held with industry, foreign partner organizations and governments. The "primary responsibility" lay with industry, which had profited from the forced labor, but the state would also make a voluntary contribution.
- » As neither the companies still in existence today nor the Republic were the legal successors to their predecessors in the Nazi period, payments made by both sides would be voluntary. The government stuck firmly to this fundamental position, which had already been confirmed in the State Treaty.
- » The goal of an international treaty agreement was to obtain a final declaration valid under international law that would protect the state and industry from additional future claims under this title.
- » The chancellor, vice chancellor and special representative also announced the figures presented in an interim report of the Historians' Commission based on a study carried out by Florian Freund and Bertrand Perz. According to this report, a total of 992,000 forced laborers had survived the end of World War II on Austrian territory, 239,000 of whom were assumed to be alive at the start of the year 2000. This number, however, included former prisoners of war and concentration camp inmates who would not be covered by this settlement by virtue of a clear legal position.
- » Finally, they attached great importance to clarifying that the compensation of former slave and forced laborers would not be dealt with in a package with individuals who had been expelled to Austria from former Czechoslovakia and former Yugoslavia as "ethnic Germans." The claims of the latter would not automatically be waived, but neither would they be linked to the issue of forced laborers.



Personal Memories also Played a Role

The final decision had thus been made: there was no longer any question of the state or industry participating in the German foundation. Austria's different position under international law would remain untouched while at the same time it would be made clear that Austria accepted its moral responsibility and, in recognition of past shortcomings, was willing to make one more voluntary gesture to demonstrate its goodwill. Maria Schau-mayer, the government special representative appointed on February 15, 2000, soon proved to be a godsend for all those who wished for success in the ensuing negotiations. In addition to her expertise, negotiating experience and a strong determination to reach an agreement with those individuals and groups concerned, she also brought personal memories to the task. These were shaped both by the negative consequences of her father's opposition to the National Socialist regime and the horrific images of the foreign forced laborers who had dragged themselves past her.

"My father was thrown out of his position as director of the Silberberg Fruit and Viticulture School in Styria without pay by the Nazis, on the grounds of political unreliability, to say nothing of the fact that he had been promised an appointment at the University of Agriculture. As we had to leave the official residence in Silberberg, we moved to Fürstenfeld where I went to school and in this fashion I enjoyed a happy childhood in an unhappy period." The relatively secure supply of food that this rural environment provided even toward the end of the war was combined with the small pleasures offered by a country town and the absence of air raids. She often saw forced conscripts from Russia, Ukraine and Poland at work on farms in the area, sometimes noticed the hardship of their daily lives and she still remembers perfectly well that the gravedigger in her new hometown of Fürstenfeld was a foreign forced laborer.

However, the backdrop to these pitiful events darkened still further. "One day in autumn 1941, while I was fetching milk illegally from a farmer, I saw a procession of wretched figures pass by, guarded by armed soldiers. As I later discovered, they were Hungarian Jews, one third of whom were used to build the South Eastern Defense Wall, another third of whom were sent directly to the concentration camp in Auschwitz, while the rest were driv-



en to labor camps around Laxenburg and Strasshof. Later, I learned from a woman who had survived and then emigrated to Latin America, where she became a doctor, that conditions there had been even worse than in some concentration camps."

"Symbolic Gesture Was Appropriate"

Heinz Kessler, a high-ranking official at the Federal Economic Chamber and Federation of Industry, also had personal memories of forced laborers. When he was unanimously elected chairman of Platform Humanitarian Action, he still saw in his mind's eye a situation he had experienced as a child, when a French prisoner of war was sent to help renovate his home in the Upper Austrian industrial town of Lenzing and his mother and grandmother were delighted at this opportunity to practice their French conversation. A warm relationship developed between the family and the Frenchman, and before the prisoner returned home in 1945, he came back to the house especially to say goodbye. "It was a debt that had to be settled," Kessler says looking back today. "One can never restore the freedom that an individual was deprived of. But a symbolic gesture, also in a material form, was appropriate, even though it comes late in the day."

Now it was time to negotiate a symbolic gesture that would recognize the wrong that had been done, bear witness to the world of Austria's recognition of this fact and at the same time make a clean break with the past and open the door to a future of co-operation in a spirit of partnership. Work started the very first day.





As a Warning for the Future

Joint Declaration of the Coalition Parties in 2000

Austria accepts her responsibility arising out of the tragic history of the 20th century and the horrendous crimes of the National Socialist regime. Our country is facing up to the light and dark sides of its past and to the deeds of all Austrians, good and evil, as its responsibility.

Nationalism, dictatorship and intolerance brought war, xenophobia, bondage, racism and mass murder. The singularity of the crimes of the Holocaust which are without precedent in history are an exhortation to permanent alertness against all forms of dictatorship and totalitarianism.

The European Union's project for a broad, democratic and prosperous Europe, to which the Federal Government is unconditionally committed, is the best guarantee against a repetition of this darkest chapter of Austrian history.

The Federal Government is committed to a self-critical scrutiny of the National Socialist past. It will ensure unreserved clarification, exposure of the structures of injustice, and the transmission of this knowledge to coming generations as a warning for the future. As regards the question of forced labor under the National Socialist regime, the Federal Government will endeavor to arrive at objective solutions in the light of the intermediate report by the Austrian commission of historians, while having regard to the primary responsibility of the companies concerned.

*From the preamble to the coalition
agreement between the ÖVP and FPÖ,
signed on February 3, 2000
by party chairmen Wolfgang Schüssel
and Jörg Haider*



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Clear Ideas from the Outset

On the very same day that Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel and Vice Chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer together with Special Representative Maria Schaumayer presented the Austrian government's plan to compensate forced laborers at a press conference, this resolute lady moved into action and summoned her staff to the offices that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had provided for her in the Amalien wing of the Hofburg. Everyone assumed she intended to hold a brief discussion; in fact the meeting lasted five hours. Maria Schaumayer appointed Dr. Martin Eichtinger as her chief of staff. Up to then, Eichtinger had been seconded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Confederation of Industry, where he was head of the International Relations Division. He held his new position from February 16 to November 6, 2000, and was later to describe this relatively brief but intensive period as "one of the most interesting and exciting times of my life." Dr. Hans Winkler, head of the department of international law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who held the rank of ambassador, was appointed head of the taskforce that would be responsible for the negotiations that now followed. He had many years of experience in dealing with and negotiating related issues (human rights, the National Fund, the Tripartite Gold Commission).

The account of events presented in this chapter is largely based on Eichtinger's written report as approved by Schaumayer and Winkler, and in respect of the international section, on the book *Imperfect Justice* by Stuart Eizenstat. Additional interviews with these three and with the lawyer Michael Kutschera were also conducted especially for this book. From the outset, the Foreign Ministry also seconded an able young diplomat, Wolfgang Renezeder, to Schaumayer's office.

Even in the first few days after taking up her position, the special government representative had very definite ideas about the content and objective of her work. Her first proposals were specific and goal-oriented, as were the negotiations about them. Policymakers, industry and victims' representatives would have to be included in the negotiations, but should not be presented with opportunities for tactical maneuvering and blockades. Efforts would be made to ensure broad support among all Austrian



parliamentary parties, as the approval of both the government and opposition would confer the greatest possible authority on an agreement. This was important, as the Austrian public was also supposed to lend its support to a solution. All these goals were achieved. Notwithstanding all the pragmatic considerations, Schaumayer never left any doubt about the main motive: "We bear no responsibility as a state for the injustice committed in those days, but it certainly behooves us to accept a moral responsibility for those events."

At the same time, however, this made it clear that there was to be a genuinely Austrian solution and from the first to the last day of negotiations, responsibility for it would lie with the government's special representative and not with the foreign lawyers.

Lawyers Only as Consultants

There was no time to carefully gather material. Only one day later, the Austrian Historians' Commission presented its interim report on forced labor. This was based on the analyses of Florian Freund and Bertrand Perz and also included the expertise drawn up by Mark Spoerer concerning the estimated number of forced laborers who had worked in Austria and were still alive. The collected data dealt with Austria as a whole and also differentiated between the individual categories and countries of origin of forced laborers. However, figures concerning fluctuation and the assignment of nationalities to economic sectors were only available for Vienna and Niederdonau (in principle what is now Lower Austria). Spoerer estimated that of the 992,000 forced laborers who had been in Austria at the end of the war in 1945, 239,000 were still alive. The Austrian side had no doubt that this figure was excessively high in terms of the negotiating issue.

From the day it was opened, Schaumayer's office received letters from former forced laborers in various countries, and lawyers representing former victims also made contact. The special representative never closed the door to discussion, as she wanted to get to know both the individu-



als with whom she would be dealing in the future and their arguments as quickly as possible. In the first week, she received Austrian lawyers who were representing victims' interests—the law firms Steiner, Georg Zanger and Andrzej Remin—as well as Austrian lawyers who had in the past represented large industrial companies on this issue. Initially, these were mainly Michael Kutschera and Florian Khol from Binder & Grösswang, who had performed valuable preliminary work representing Austrian industries since the late 1990s. They were later joined by Florian Kremslehner and Natalie Bechter from Dorda, Brugger & Jordis. The offices of Binder & Grösswang had already hired the US law firm Weil, Gotshal & Mangers LLP (Arvin Maskin and Conrad Cailteux) to represent Austrian business interests in the USA, so that the taskforce did not have to hire a separate team of lawyers for the Republic of Austria during the entire negotiations.

A week after she started work, Maria Schaumayer received a visit from the American lawyer Edward Fagan, who immediately organized one of the spectacular media appearances that he used to attract attention. Both before and after his first meeting with Schaumayer, he organized press conferences at which he not only made large financial demands, but also called for the negotiations to include the unresolved restitution claims of people who had not been forced laborers. However, his style proved counterproductive as he merely succeeded in strengthening Maria Schaumayer's determination to obtain information from the victims' lawyers, but to negotiate exclusively with government representatives and clothe the result in the form of an intergovernmental agreement. She informed the victims' lawyers of her decision at her very first meetings with them.

Negotiating Partners: Associations and Governments

From the outset, Maria Schaumayer focused on Central and Eastern Europe as well as the USA. Victims' associations organized as foundations had existed in these countries for many years and had also acted as negotiating partners for the Federal Republic of Germany. Initially, contact with these organizations was established by the former Polish ambassa-



dor to Austria, Jan Barcz, and Viennese attorney Elisabeth Steiner, who had already visited victims' associations in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. In bilateral discussions, Schaumayer persuaded all the representatives of these states that intergovernmental agreements would be the best solution, as a result of which the East European representatives rejected both the involvement of the lawyers in direct negotiations and the threat of class action law suits. The Austrian lawyers representing the companies that were under attack also eventually agreed to a solution whereby government representatives would negotiate with the US government. The Austrian side saw a clear advantage in this approach as opposed to class action suits that would include at least an indirect acknowledgement of guilt and whose outcome could never be predicted with any degree of certainty. Class action suits would also mean absolutely no state involvement, and therefore legal security, and would certainly reduce the amount of money won for the victims due to the high contingency fees to be paid to the plaintiffs' lawyers.

The Czech Republic and Hungary were special cases in these discussions. Special consideration had to be given to a separate list of criteria for forced laborers from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Nazi Germany had treated the highly qualified laborers from that area, who frequently spoke German, better than the other Slavs who held an extremely lowly place in the inhumane Nazi hierarchy of races. From the very beginning, the Austrian side made it clear that foreign workers who had really come voluntarily and who had also been able to freely return to their home countries (in particular managerial employees) should not receive compensation from the category of forced labor. In the end, a gesture was made to Czech victims' organizations by allowing them to become directly involved in the final negotiations. At a time when Austrian-Czech relations were strained by the conflicts over the Benes Decrees and the Czech nuclear plant in Temelín, as well as Czech participation in the "sanctions" imposed upon Austria by the other 14 EU states, this decision was reported positively in the Czech media. The Czech ambassador in Vienna, Jiri Grusa, also made an extremely valuable contribution to discussions designed to ease the tensions.

In the case of Hungary, the issue was the Hungarian Jews, originally numbering 15,000, who had been "exchanged" for supplies of materials. Al-



though they were spared the concentration camp, they suffered unspeakably (if they survived their tortures at all) during construction of the South Eastern Defense Wall and during "death marches" on Austrian territory in the last weeks of the Nazi regime. After studying the documents provided by the Hungarian historian Szabolcs Szita, Maria Schaumayer decided that the "exchange Jews" who were not included in the German Foundation for forced laborers that had since been established and those Jews who had survived the murderous construction of the South Eastern Defensive Wall should be compensated, and would receive the maximum payment as "slave laborers." This decision was motivated not least of all by the special representative's own memories of the emaciated figures from such work brigades who had stumbled past her during the war. Foundation Jewish Legacy in Hungary, founded by the Hungarian government in 1997, was recognized by Austria as a negotiating partner, although Edward Fagan would have liked to have represented this group of victims as well.

Generous Decision by Austria

Maria Schaumayer was of the opinion that draft legislation should be drawn up as quickly as possible on the basis of serious historical documents. She therefore not only met with the head of the Historians' Commission, Clemens Jabloner, president of the Administrative Court, but also with the leading historian from the German Foundation, Lutz Niethammer, who personally came to Vienna for this purpose. The Austrian negotiators were able to draw upon German experience and recommendations in several respects in an effort to avoid unpleasant developments, and Schaumayer and the German chief negotiator Count Otto Lambsdorff were soon in close and regular contact. Other contemporary historians who were not members of the Historians' Commission, such as professors Stefan Karner, Oliver Rathkolb and Gabriela Hauch, also provided important decision guidance. On the whole, experts regard the agreed solution as a model of fruitful cooperation between politics and academia.

A decision also had to be made about whether forced laborers who had worked in agriculture should also receive compensation. After all, in many



cases they had enjoyed better living conditions than forced laborers in factories and other urban locations, did not generally suffer as much hunger and were at less risk from air raids than industrial workers who were usually confined in barracks and forbidden to take refuge in air raid shelters. The German Foundation did not explicitly include agricultural workers as a category of victims, merely providing for the possibility of compensating such individuals at the discretion of those applying the law if there was sufficient money available. That had been a cause of bitterness between Poland and Germany. Schaumayer held the view that Austria should include agricultural workers as a category of forced laborers in the law. In her view, this was justified by the mere fact of their forced deportation under frequently traumatic conditions, but certainly by the fact that none of these people were at liberty to return to their homes at will.

The working party also discussed whether claimants should be instructed to submit their claims directly to the Fund to be established in Austria. That would have ensured transparency, but as many victims had already submitted their documentation to victims' associations in Eastern Europe, they would have been forced to make new photocopies and resubmit them. Austria once again made a decision favorable to those who had already suffered enough, and agreed that claims would be processed through the victims' associations in Belarus, Poland, the Russian Federation, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine. On the other hand, neither did the office of the special representative want to fob off claimants who had already submitted applications directly to them with the usual bureaucratic formulation ("we confirm the receipt of ... will be processed by the responsible organization in...") and wanted to deal with them forthwith. That entailed a great deal of work as no less than 2,300 direct applications were received between February and December 2000 alone. It was also important that this correspondence, which was frequently supplemented by telephone calls, provided valuable insight into personal fates as well as opportunities to convey personal sympathy, which was at least as important to many of these unfortunate people as money.

To round off measures to be taken within Austria, the government special representative also requested the provincial governors to appoint a coordinator in each province. Their task was to obtain confirmations that had been requested with regard to periods of forced labor from registration



The Board of Trustees of the Reconciliation Fund chaired by the Austrian chancellor made all important decisions about how the Fund would carry out its work and how the remaining money would be used.

Source: Hopi-Media/Bernhard J. Holzner

offices, social insurance institutions or companies and to provide other necessary information. Subsequently, these coordinators also assisted in the verification of the lists of claimants submitted by the East European victims' associations. In this manner, the provincial coordinators created a framework for the expeditious processing of applications, which cannot be valued highly enough. The German archives only developed comparable networks at a much later date. Of course, the crucial test had to be passed in the USA. The United States government regarded itself as the spokesperson of all those Western states that were now home to former forced laborers who were not represented by a Central or East European government. Furthermore, unofficially, it had always been clear to all those involved that only the inclusion of the USA in a comprehensive agreement would be able to give it the necessary global authority and guarantee Austria an end to class action suits in the USA, and thus ensure legal peace.



A Special Kind of Grandmother

On March 20, 2000, Maria Schaumayer flew to Washington to meet the special representative of the Clinton Administration, Stuart E. Eizenstat. Maria Schaumayer now admits to having had her heart in her mouth on two occasions in her career: before her first meeting with the governors of national banks from all over the world, and before her first meeting with Eizenstat: "The whole Republic trembled in my knees." She dealt with both situations superbly, in the latter case also thanks to her political counterpart. Stuart Eizenstat had been appointed special envoy for issues concerning compensation for Holocaust victims in 1995, while he was still working for the US State Department. He continued to hold this position after becoming Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. In his book *Imperfect Justice* he describes growing up in Atlanta in the American South. The Holocaust was never discussed in his home, and it was only while traveling on business to Lithuania in 1995 that he discovered that three sisters of his maternal grandfather had in all probability perished in 1941 when the Jews in his home village of Vilkomir, now Ukmerge, were murdered. "From that day forward, the crimes of World War II were no longer to me merely a historical event." (p. 29)

Eizenstat also refers to the events leading up to the first meeting with the Austrian special representative: the sanctions imposed by the other 14 EU member states on Austria for including the Freedom Party in the government, Israel's decision to withdraw its ambassador from Austria, the recall of the US Ambassador in Vienna, Kathryn Hall, for consultations to Washington. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright assured Eizenstat that she had known Chancellor Schüssel for years and respected him and therefore recommended negotiating in good faith. The Clinton administration instructed Eizenstat to commence negotiations with Austria immediately, and Secretary of State Albright encouraged him not to shy away from contact with whomever it was necessary to guarantee success.

"Fortunately, a remarkable person, Maria Schaumayer, appeared as my negotiating partner," Eizenstat later wrote in his book *Imperfect Justice* (pages 285 ff. of the English edition). "She, like Count Lambsdorff, would prove to be one of the most able people with whom I dealt in all of the



Holocaust-related negotiations." In one of his less than gallant media statements, Ed Fagan had referred to her as a grandmother with whom he did not really know how to deal. Stuart Eizenstat wrote that, "with her neatly groomed gray hair, sparkling eyes, effervescent smile, and upbeat manner, Maria Schaumayer could have passed for anyone's grandmother. But she was unlike any grandmother I knew. Crisp and confident in a country of wartime shadows, she had long experience at the top levels of public service." At their first meeting in Eizenstat's office at the Treasury Department in Washington on March 20, 2000, "she made it clear that she wanted no repeat of the haggling we had had with the Germans over who would participate in the negotiations. The Eastern European governments, the plaintiffs' attorneys, the Jewish groups—all would be included, she emphatically said. Nor would she struggle like the Germans over the status of the agricultural workers; a substantial portion of Austria's forced laborers had worked on farms, and she promised that they would be covered." Eizenstat found that having to negotiate "only with Maria" ("as she insisted I call her") "greatly eased my burden. She presented clear criteria for beneficiaries and tried to be as inclusive as possible." This meant the inclusion of not only the Hungarian Jews, but also of the children who had worked in labor camps, as well as women who had been forced to have an abortion or who had had their newborn children taken away from them. The compensation, which was modeled on the German arrangement, was to be fully paid out to all claimants irrespective of the number of surviving workers in a single act, while the Germans had laid down a fixed maximum sum, which meant that if there were more claimants than expected, per capita payments could have been reduced.

Eizenstat continued: "But Maria firmly drew one boundary. She said that her mandate extended only to slave and forced labor issues, which were to be kept strictly separate from the much more complex and contentious problem of looted property. This separation would cause me the greatest difficulty in my negotiations. The plaintiffs' lawyers wanted the issues joined to gain leverage, but this was hardly merely a tactical matter for the Austrians. The labor claims were of primary interest to the nations of Eastern Europe that had supplied most of the workers; today these nations were Austria's diplomatic and economic partners. By contrast, most of the property claims were held by Jews who had fled Austria before the war and were scattered across Europe, Israel and the United States."



Better for the Forced Laborers

The US had thus officially confirmed that in insisting on a strict separation of the two negotiating issues, Austria was also representing the interests of neighboring Central and East European states. Austria's own tactical interest lay in reaching a rapid solution for the problem of forced laborers that would serve as a sign of good faith and provide additional momentum for the second issue. Indeed, Eizenstat confirmed that the discussions concerning forced laborers had proceeded "with dispatch" and that he had received a copy of a draft law only a little more than a month after his first meeting with Maria Schaumayer. Eizenstat was impressed that Austria intended to base its compensation payments on those made by Germany, and in some regards wanted to be even more generous. In exchange, the USA agreed that Austria, like Germany, would receive an undertaking of future legal peace through an Executive Agreement. The German Foundation declared that it would provide compensation for prisoners from Mauthausen concentration camp and its satellite camps as well as the satellite camps of Dachau concentration camp on Austrian territory who had been assigned to forced labor. This was in conformity with the German Federal Law for the Compensation of the Victims of National Socialist Persecution, 1956. The German chief negotiator, Count Otto Lambsdorff, also explicitly confirmed Germany's sole responsibility at a press conference in Vienna on June 23, 2000.

"By separating the two issues of forced labor and restitution, Austria was able to make the negotiating process more advantageous for the victims," Maria Schaumayer said in April 2002 (Herko, *Die Frage der ehemaligen Zwangsarbeiter*, p. 84 f.). "If we had left it as a single issue like Germany, no forced laborer would have received a euro so far." Of course, it is also true that the American side was equally impressed by having a single negotiating partner who was authorized, competent and willing to speedily reach a generous solution. According to Hans Winkler's account, Eizenstat had declared that following the wearisome haggling that he had experienced in the negotiations with Germany, he "never wanted to experience negotiations like that" in his life again, in which everyone quarreled with everyone about specific sums of money. The exclusion of the plaintiffs' lawyers from the government negotiations agreed with the organizations

representing East European victims was a crucial contributing factor to this constructive atmosphere. Austria honored it by establishing a Legal Working Group. This body provided a forum in which the US lawyers could hold lengthy discussions with the Austrians. The Austrian representatives Winkler and Eichtinger together with two lawyers repeatedly traveled to Washington for these meetings in order to spare their negotiating partners time-consuming and expensive trips to Vienna. The meetings of this Legal Working Group were initially structured as intergovernmental discussions, with the subsequent inclusion of the Austrian lawyers and finally the inclusion of all the plaintiffs' lawyers in the plenary sessions.

Eichtinger noted this very constructive atmosphere at the very first meeting with Deputy Secretary Eizenstat: "Eizenstat evidently appreciated the goal-oriented climate of debate, the rapid progress that was made and had an extremely high regard for Ambassador Winkler, whom he had known for many years from negotiations..." He had also come to appreciate Eichtinger as a competent manager at an EU symposium that Eichtinger had organized at Johns Hopkins University in Washington.



Special Government Representative Maria Schaumayer found a particularly cooperative partner at the parliamentary level in then President of the Nationalrat Heinz Fischer, now the president of Austria.

Source: APA Images/Robert Jäger

Concerted Effort Led to Success

The first meeting of the Legal Working Group on April 28, 2000, which was followed by four further meetings in the US capital, was preceded by consultations between the government special representative and all parliamentary parties, industry representatives and associations of former concentration camp prisoners, resistance fighters and Roma living in Austria. One of the very first individuals to participate in the negotiations, the Viennese lawyer Michael Kutschera, later said, "within a couple of weeks, we had become a close-knit team, and Ambassador Winkler proved to be a fantastic chief negotiator." Maria Schaumayer found a particularly cooperative partner at the parliamentary level in Heinz Fischer, then President of the Nationalrat and now president of the Republic of Austria. He declared his understanding for the unusual fact—and defended it before the political parties—that Austria's parliament would ultimately pass a law, the content of which had been shaped by the USA and several



Ambassador Hans Winkler, who was appointed deputy minister of foreign affairs in mid-2005, conducted the negotiations with skill and sensitivity.

Source: Hopi-Media/Ingrid Sontacchi

Central and East European states. It was also new that the content of an Austrian law referred to a German law and vice-versa. Ambassador Hans Winkler also praised "the great tolerance of the Austrian parliament for having agreed to this somewhat unorthodox approach," saying that President Fischer and the representatives of all parliamentary parties deserved "special thanks." Members of government and MPs from all parties contributed to this pleasing success: from the People's Party Chancellor Schüssel and above all Parliamentary Group Leader Andreas Khol and MP Ulrike Baumgartner-Gabitzer, who had already been involved in raising funds for the industry initiative in her capacity as Secretary General of



the Austrian Association of Electricity Companies (VEÖ); from the Social Democratic Party Heinz Fischer, Parliamentary Group Leader Peter Kostelka; from the Freedom Party Vice Chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer and the MPs Herbert Haupt and Michael Krüger; and from the Green Party the highly committed Terezija Stoisits. The first draft law that Schaumayer's office had drawn up together with experts and presented to the parliamentary parties on April 27, 2000, of course failed to satisfy the US side. This bill scaled the level of compensation payments according to nationality in keeping with National Socialist racial ideology—on the principle of "more money for those nationalities that had been subject to greater discrimination." Members of the Austrian Historians' Commission had believed that this principle would hold up, but the Americans demanded "material criteria for discrimination" because in practice the harshness of the treatment meted out to East European workers had varied and Western Europeans had often been treated no better than the East Europeans. This justified demand was reflected in a second bill that was submitted on May 31 and passed by a unanimous vote of the Austrian Nationalrat in July as an MPs' initiative. The path to this solution had been paved by the international Reconciliation Conference held on May 16 and 17 at the Hofburg in Vienna, for which Maria Schaumayer had in turn created an important prerequisite with a television interview.

Six Billion Schillings: That Was the Breakthrough

On April 30, 2000, the special government representative appeared on the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation's regular Sunday morning program *Pressestunde*, facing journalists who of course wanted to know how much money Austria would be willing to pay to compensate former forced laborers. No official decision had yet been made on this question. It was therefore a surprise for even well informed viewers when Schaumayer announced the specific amount of six billion schillings (Austria's currency at the time), the equivalent of approximately 436 million euros, more than 400 million US dollars. This prompted some media to spread the story, which it has proved impossible to dispel, that in doing so Schaumayer had followed her "inner instinct." "She had never discussed this figure with



Chancellor Schüssel and Maria Schaumayer were pleased with the successes of the ambassadors Hans Winkler and Ernst Sucharipa, (second from left, passed away in summer 2005).

Source: Hopi-Media/Bernhard J. Holzner

me, with the plaintiffs' attorneys, with Austrian industry, or even with her own negotiating team," Stuart Eizenstat later wrote. "We were all equally surprised. Initially, I saw this as an irritating replay of the unilateral announcements I had come to expect from the Germans. But the figure was so generous that few could argue with it..."

Maria Schaumayer is not a gambler, and certainly not where financial matters are concerned. Of course, she had considered the problem and also discussed it with important adversaries and close members of her team, but without having reached a formal decision. She hoped that by making a generous offer she would be able to kill any desire for undignified haggling and at the same time expose once and for all as unrealistic the astronomical demands made by certain class action suits (Edward Fagan had demanded 60 billion schillings for forced laborers and a further 80 billion for confiscated Jewish assets in his class actions). This strategy was to prove successful, and none of the sides seriously contested the figure of six billion that Schaumayer had suggested. In order to secure it in an international agreement as soon as possible, the Austrian government invited




representatives of the principle sources of forced laborers in Austria to a conference on May 16, 2000, at the Hofburg in Vienna to be alternately chaired by Maria Schaumayer and Stuart Eizenstat.

Eizenstat was pleased by both the rapid progress of negotiations under his Viennese counterpart and the first kosher meal to be served in this historic setting under the eyes of Empress Maria Theresa. He skillfully appealed to the plaintiffs' lawyers from the US, arguing that "they needed to trust Chancellor Schüssel" and asked them "how, in good conscience, they could use their property cases to deny some 150,000 aging former laborers—their own clients—a long-awaited and deserved payment." (page 289) As they stood firm and remained adamant in their demands that the labor and property negotiations be conducted together, Eizenstat proposed the appointment of a separate Austrian special envoy for restitution claims. On May 18, the seasoned Austrian diplomat Ernst Sucharipa was appointed as the special envoy for the restitution negotiations. Following the conclusion of the sometimes extremely tough negotiations, Eizenstat was to praise him as "an unassuming man who did heroic work." (page 314)

Agreement Is Reached at the Hofburg Conference

Chancellor Schüssel quickly proved to be a constructive negotiating partner, and Eizenstat confessed that "I soon became a fan of his, validating Secretary Albright's confidence. Although Schüssel was a very tough negotiator who held his cards close to his chest, I would soon come to trust him as a person of his word." (page 290) Something else that Eizenstat noticed was that "his spartan office was in sharp contrast to the opulent palace in which I had met President Klestil the day before." In retrospect he also showed a certain degree of understanding for why the People's Party had opted for a coalition government with elements of the FPÖ, even though he personally "certainly did not approve."

Eizenstat was all the more struck by the difference in the tone of his meetings with Hannah Lessing, head of the Austrian National Fund, and Ariel



Muzicant, President of the Austrian Jewish Community. Both expressed considerable concern with regard to the future of Jews in Austria, although Muzicant also implored him "to stop Fagan from raving." Nevertheless, it became increasingly clear to Eizenstat that the restitution negotiations were moving into stormy waters.

Fortunately, this was not the case with the negotiations concerning forced laborers. Thanks to the excellent preparatory work of Schaumayer and her team, the Reconciliation Conference at the Vienna Hofburg had achieved results in the following areas:

- » Victims' representatives from the Central and East European states Belarus, Poland, the Russian Federation, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Ukraine and the USA agreed to victims' categories and the amounts of compensation envisaged for them that Austria had drawn up: slave laborers, forced laborers in industry, forced laborers in agriculture, children who had been deported with them and female forced laborers who had given birth to children in Austria.
- » The designated amounts would be paid out in single payments and irrespective of the total number of applications, and not in two installments as was the case with the German foundation, whereby the amount paid out in the first and second installments varied according to the payment category and the individual possibilities of the partner organizations.
- » All the states represented agreed that there would probably be an estimated 150,000 victims: perhaps 120,000 in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, 30,000 in all other states of the world. Subsequent attempts by certain victims' lawyers to resurrect the original figure of 239,000 failed because Austria offered to provide a "safety margin" of 20 percent for the "rest of the world" as opposed to the 10 percent contained in the agreement with Germany. Experience showed that the Austrian assumption was correct. By the closing date, a total of 131,578 applications had been received.
- » The Central and East European states recognized the planned total amount of six billion schillings (more than 400 million dollars at that time) as appropriate. Deputy Secretary Eizenstat initially withheld his



agreement on behalf of the USA in Vienna, but gave it subsequently at a meeting of the Legal Working Group on June 7, 2000.

- » The Central and East European states declared that they had "in principle" agreed to the draft accord with Austria although minor editorial changes were still needed. On June 2, 2000, a protocol was signed concerning the planned bilateral agreements between the individual countries and Austria. Only details of the maximum amounts up to which each state would be entitled to make claims (national caps) were missing as no final estimates were expected before September.

Acceptance in Central and Eastern Europe

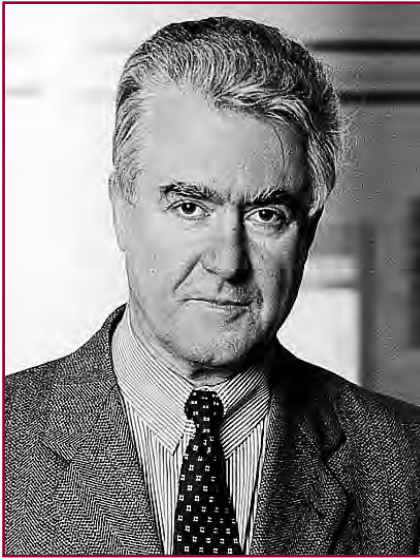
Special Government Representative Maria Schaumayer was now keen to reach binding agreements with the Central and East European states—if possible before June 6, 2000, the date on which the Reconciliation Fund Bill would be brought before parliament. Bilateral negotiations were first of all conducted with Belarus, Poland, the Russian Federation, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine on the basis of identical treaty texts. The results of the negotiations were then standardized at a joint conference on June 2. One negotiating issue concerned the deadline after which compensation would also be paid to the heirs of a deceased forced laborer. The negotiating partners wanted the date that had been agreed one year earlier with Germany, namely February 15, 1999, but finally agreed to February 15, 2000 as proposed by Austria, the date on which the special government representative had been appointed. However, the Central and East Europeans prevailed with their demand that legal succession among the heirs of victims would be governed by the respective national laws. Other negotiating issues included legal peace, the duty to give information, exemption of all compensation payments from taxes and the right of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund to inspect the documentation of the partner organizations. A number of countries from which forced laborers had also been recruited during the Nazi period retroactively demanded inclusion in the negotiations: the Baltic states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro), Croatia, Slovenia and Slo-



vakia. Eventually, these states also accepted that Austria only wished to reach bilateral agreements on the German model, but that according to the terms of the law, each former forced laborer could apply directly to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund. In cases where there was no partner organization, victims' associations would be able to collect applications and forward them collectively to the Fund. On June 2, 2000, a protocol concerning the conclusion in principle of bilateral agreements with the Central and East European states was signed. Finally, in early September 2000, bilateral agreements were reached on the maximum payments that would be disbursed to victims of each country.

Money from Industry

Notwithstanding all this international activity, Maria Schaumayer, who was supported by Chancellor Schüssel, determinedly pressed ahead with raising money from industry. At a meeting at parliament between herself, the minister of economic affairs Martin Bartenstein, Heinz Kessler, the chairman of Platform Humanitarian Action that had been established on May 19, 2000, and its executive officer Christoph Kainz, it was decided that a letter would be sent to all business enterprises in Austria with more than 100 employees calling upon them to make a "humanitarian gesture" in an "act of voluntary solidarity." Special Government Representative Maria Schaumayer and Honorary President of the Confederation of Industry Heinz Kessler wrote this letter on July 10, 2000, signing 2,700 copies personally. They explained that the international negotiations had entered the final phase and that the universally desired legal peace beckoned in exchange for an agreement. As a guideline for the "non reclaimable contribution," they recommended 0.2 percent of each company's turnover in 1999, "plus a supplementary payment based on the employment of concentration camp prisoners and forced laborers in that period," meaning that as many companies as possible were supposed to contribute (the appeal was addressed to all business sectors, including those organizations representing agriculture and forestry), but those that had actually employed forced laborers were supposed to pay a little more. As expected reactions varied—ranging from "of course" to "out of the question". Some companies



Heinz Kessler played a leading role in the negotiations with Austrian industry.

Source: IV.net/Nettingsdorfer Papierfabrik

drew attention to the simultaneous campaign in Germany, which addressed "all enterprises on the territory of the Reich at that time;" some companies felt that they were now being importuned a second time. To resolve this problem, a gentlemen's agreement was negotiated with German companies that was designed to prevent double payments; nevertheless, a number of businesses did indeed pay twice because the German Foundation rarely freed companies from commitments that had entered into. Wisely, steps were not taken to verify whether each company had indeed offered 0.2 percent of its turnover. Recognizably lower offers were followed up on with telephone

calls. One individual who was called replied "my family was gassed in the Nazi period." Urging an atonement payment in this case would have been highly inappropriate. However, nobody answered, "we employed forced laborers, but are not going to pay anything."

State-owned industries alone contributed approximately one billion schillings through Österreichische Industrieholding Aktiengesellschaft (ÖIAG) (approximately 72.6 million euros). The largest single contributors included Austrian Railways (200 million schillings = 14.5 million euros) and the electricity industry (160 million schillings = 11.6 million euros). In the private sector, the paper industry set a good example, donating a total of 80 million schillings (5.8 million euros). Companies from the transport sector were also very cooperative, while the tourist industry responded reluctantly in comparison. It was planned that banks would contribute to the fund for victims of Aryanization. Larger companies welcomed the fact that the Insolvenzentgeltsicherungsfond, a fund that covers wage claims of workers at companies that have become insolvent and that also includes medium-sized enterprises, was used to ensure that the burden was equally shared between the different sized companies. Forced laborers had also



Christoph Kainz from the Federal Economic Chamber was the executive officer of Platform Humanitarian Action.

Source: Braintrust/J. P. Veres

been assigned to the estates of the Roman Catholic Church, and it was the bishop of Graz Johann Weber who was the first to express a desire to make a contribution, followed by the dioceses of Klagenfurt, Vienna and Linz.

In retrospect, Austrian industry can be considered to have shown both a sense of responsibility and sensitivity toward the problem. All in all, it made a substantial contribution to the overall solution. Due to the fact that there was no insistence that industry raise the money to compensate its forced laborers and the agricultural sector the contributions for the workers it had employed, there were no problems if a claimant was

re-categorized during the examination of his or her application. As the Federal Economic Chamber, which had started the collection during the presidency of Leopold Maderthaner and finished it under his successor Christoph Leitl, had not used any of the Chamber's own funds, it was sufficient to present a final report to the democratically elected Chamber assembly that permitted no ifs and buts. The manager of the platform, Christoph Kainz, still remembers with gratitude Maria Schaumayer's approach, which was characterized by "warm-heartedness, knowledge and dignity."

Unanimous Vote in Parliament

In the meantime, the law had been revised to meet the US demand for objective criteria for discrimination. To this end, the historical sources were re-examined, in particular the Poland Edicts that had come into force on



March 8, 1940, and the Eastern Worker Edicts from February 2, 1942. The Poland Edicts required that Poles wear a "P" symbol on their clothing and prohibited sexual relations with Germans on pain of death. The Eastern Worker Edicts went even further, requiring accommodation in guarded camps, forbidding pastoral care and providing for lower wages and inferior food.

Following discussions with the Austrian Jewish Community (IKG) and the Jewish Claims Conference and an undertaking from Maria Schaumayer to Austrian victims' organizations, an additional category of victim was included in the law: individuals who for political motives, reasons of ancestry, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, physical or mental handicap, accusation of supposed anti-social behavior or in connection with medical experiments were coerced by the National Socialist regime to work on the territory of present-day Austria under conditions equivalent to those of forced labor in industry or agriculture. This law establishing the Austrian Reconciliation Fund with its headquarters in Vienna was referred to the Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Nationalrat on June 6, 2000, with the votes of all four parliamentary parties. It had deliberately not been submitted as a government bill, as is usually the case, but as a petition of the MPs Andreas Khol (People's Party), Josef Cap (Social Democrats), Peter Westenthaler (Freedom Party) and Terezija Stoisits (Green Party). On June 30, 2000, the petition and the committee report drawn up by the taskforce were unanimously adopted. Final approval was given to the law and the committee report in the plenary session of the Nationalrat on July 7, 2000—less than five months after Maria Schaumayer's appointment as special representative. On July 19, 2000, the bill was unanimously passed by the second chamber of the Austrian parliament, the Bundesrat. These decisions were positively received both in Austria and abroad. Edward Fagan's cry of "Shame on you, Federal Republic of Austria!" at a press conference remained an isolated protest.

A telephone survey carried out on behalf of Österreichische Gesellschaft für Europapolitik showed that 79 percent of those surveyed favored compensating forced laborers who had sustained damage to their health, 68 percent advocated compensation for Jewish concentration camp forced laborers and 59 percent approved of compensation in principle for every surviving victim of forced labor. A year earlier, the same questions had



resulted in positive responses from 60, 44 and 48 percent of the respondents respectively. During the year of negotiations, public opinion, which all over the world attaches priority to the careful use of taxpayers' money, had improved significantly.

On June 23, 2000, as soon as the law had been passed in Vienna, Maria Schaumayer met Count Otto Lambsdorff, whose official title was Special Representative of the Federal Chancellor for the Foundation Initiative of German Enterprises, and who had been invited to Vienna for a further discussion on the coordination of the Austrian and German solutions. It was agreed that a clause would be adopted making claimants who had received compensation payments for slave or forced labor from one of the two countries ineligible for payments by the other country. Recipients of payments would also be required to irrevocably renounce any further claims against the two states. Count Lambsdorff once again affirmed Germany's sole responsibility for forced laborers from concentration camps.

Although Germany had already commenced negotiations in February 1999, the German law was passed only a few days earlier than the Austrian law (by the Bundestag on July 6, 2000, and the Bundesrat on July 14, 2000). This was partly because Germany had negotiated the forced labor and restitution issues together. However, it also reflected the helpfulness of the Germans who had so willingly passed on their experience to their Austrian counterparts.

Washington, a Hard Nut to Crack

However, the Austrian negotiating team still had to surmount a final difficulty and reach an Executive Agreement with the United States as the prerequisite for a Statement of Interest from the US government. The Americans repeatedly and with increasing adamance pressed for clear undertakings and measurable progress in the restitution negotiations. As Stuart Eizenstat wrote, "When Hans Winkler and Martin Eichtinger ... visited me on July 21 to finalize the labor agreement, I then warned them that Sucharipa's proposals had to be broadened to cover all property claims,

with a timetable for settling them." Eventually, a formula for compromise was found, but no sooner had this been done than the next problem arose. The US lawyers wanted to regard the 150 million dollars offered by the Austrian chancellor as a "down payment," Schüssel on the other hand insisted that it would be a final payment. Any additional money would have to come from the private sector. Eizenstat responded by indicating that he was prepared to break off the negotiations unless the offer was improved. At the same time, however, the US special representative made it clear to the lawyers that he would not support their demand for a reopening of all property restitution cases that had been brought since the end of the war, reminding them that they had never won a Holocaust case in court. He also told them that the East European governments had complained bitterly to him that the US lawyers were unnecessarily delaying a solution for forced laborers. When Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called Schüssel on September 16, the chancellor said, "let Stu come to Vienna and



Chancellor Schüssel later bestowed a high Austrian honor on the tough but understanding US chief negotiator, Stuart Eizenstat, in recognition of his efforts in the negotiations.

Source: Hopi-Media/Bernhard J. Holzner

Benefiting from Germany's Experience

Austria Was Able to Avoid the Weaknesses that Had Plagued Earlier Negotiations

During the negotiations concerning compensation for forced laborers, the Austrians gratefully drew on the experience of their German counterparts, who had started their negotiations more than a year earlier and generously shared their knowledge with the Austrians. As a result, Austria was able to gain a great deal of useful information and avoid pitfalls. This was especially true in the following areas:

- » The establishment of a fund endowed jointly by the state and industry as a separate legal person; unlike Germany, Austria did not lay down specific percentages to be contributed by each of the financing parties and consequently avoided irritating disputes about arrears while funding was being raised.
 - » Clarification of the criteria defining forced labor (the crucial factor for Austria was that the workers were prevented from returning to their own countries).
 - » One-time payment of a fixed sum by Austria irrespective of the number of applications; Germany chose to make an initial payment to be followed by a second installment up to a maximum limit agreed in advance. This led to
- resentment concerning the first payment, which was often regarded as inadequate, and to urgent enquiries about the second installment.
- » Agreement between the two countries regarding the need for inter-governmental agreements instead of direct agreements between those making the payments and the recipients (a lesson learned from the Swiss negotiations), and the involvement of the USA in order to obtain legal peace. The Reconciliation Fund was confirmed as the exclusive remedy and forum for the resolution of all claims involving or related to the use of slave or forced labor.
 - » Equal amounts for slave and forced laborers in both countries. As a result, Austria was able to avoid many problems from the outset.
 - » Legal guarantees of legal security: in the case of Germany the biggest class action suits first had to be withdrawn, after which the Bundestag had to decide whether legal security could be assumed; Austria obtained an undertaking that all lawsuits would be withdrawn as the prerequisite for the first payment.

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- » Austria was able to negotiate the issues of compensation for forced laborers and claims for looted property (Aryanization) separately. This speeded up the negotiations on the labor issue, but as the negotiations were largely conducted in parallel proved beneficial for the property claims.
- » Austria was able to considerably improve the atmosphere of the negotiations by keeping the plaintiffs' lawyers out of the official negotiations, but then involving them through a Legal Working Group that met once in Vienna and four times in Washington. The appointment of experienced Austrian diplomats with the corresponding authority also proved useful—the German negotiators were also experienced, but not such high-ranking officials.
- » Austria believes its decision was a wise one not to follow the German example of entrusting the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with the disbursement of compensation payments for forced laborers in countries where the Reconciliation Fund did not have a partner organization. IOM, which was founded in 1951, has performed extremely valuable work supporting migrants from all over the world (11 million in 2000), but ran into bureaucratic difficulties carrying out the tasks entrusted to it by the German Foundation law. The Austrian Reconciliation Fund also felt the effects of this when attempting to identify individuals who fell within its sphere of responsibility using IOM documents.

we can discuss it all!" At the same time, he made it clear that with the EU having lifted its sanctions, the USA would now formally have to give up its policy of "limited contacts." On October 5, 2000, Stuart Eizenstat came to Vienna and in negotiations that lasted until midnight, agreed on the main points of a restitution agreement with Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel. The Republic of Austria would set up a General Settlement Fund to work according to generally agreed principles and that would be endowed with a capped amount still to be negotiated. A sum of 150 million dollars would immediately be made available to settle the claims of surviving Holocaust victims for the Aryanization of long-term apartment leases and commercial property, household goods and personal possessions. In return, Aus-



tria and Austrian enterprises would receive legal peace. In an additional demonstration of goodwill, Schüssel agreed to certain exceptions in connection with promised welfare benefits, such as nursing care payments and the crediting of contribution periods for retirement pensions for Jews who had been dispossessed in Austria and who were now living in Israel. Subsequently, the Austrian government abandoned its insistence on legal peace as the precondition for the granting of these benefits.

In his memoirs (page 298), Eizenstat recalls that "my experience with presidents, prime ministers, and chancellors is that they almost never engage in detailed substantive negotiations, and certainly not without their aides." Jimmy Carter was an exception to this rule in the USA and "Schüssel was another, underscoring both his knowledge of the subject and its extreme political sensitivity." The framework agreement reached that night formed the basis for the protracted restitution negotiations, which remained heated until the very day agreement was finally reached on January 17, 2001, in Washington. The labor agreement, however, was already signed on October 24, 2000. Between October 5 and 24, the American and Austrian negotiators resolved the final details, with the legal advisor of the State Department, Eric Rosand, playing an extremely constructive role. Of course, the highlight of the final round of negotiations was a letter from President Bill Clinton to President Thomas Klestil, praising Austria's "historic achievement," and expressing the hope that the restitution negotiations would be brought to a successful conclusion.

"I commend your gesture, which combines responsible action with vision and humanity," Clinton assured him. Maria Schaumayer and Ambassador Sucharipa also received similar letters from US National Security Advisor Sandy Berger and Beth Nolan, the White House legal advisor.

October 24, 2000: Solemn Signing of the Agreement

There was relief among Austrian officials on October 24, 2000, as Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel and the heads of the foreign delegations (Ambassador Kathryn Hall representing the US, Alexander Petrov from Belarus,

Jerzy Kranz from Poland, Jan Kavan from the Czech Republic, Olexander Maidannyk from Ukraine and Zsolt Visy representing Hungary) signed the bilateral agreements and the Executive Agreement with the USA. This obliged the US administration to refer all US courts and administrative authorities invoked in forced-labor issues to this agreement and to recommend them to dismiss such claims as contrary to the foreign policy interest of the United States (Statement of Interest). The most important provisions of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund Law were attached to the Executive Agreement in an annex so that this "somewhat unusual procedure" as Ambassador Winkler called it, became "virtually binding under international law, meaning that it cannot be modified unilaterally." Russia was the only country in which the national approval process had not yet been completed, as a result of which Chancellor Schüssel and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov were only able to sign the Agreement on November 27, 2000.

The ceremony on October 24 was also attended by leading representatives of all Austrian parliamentary parties. A Joint Statement was signed by



After the signing of the international agreements regarding compensation for forced laborers on October 24, 2000 (from left): Olexander Maidannyk (Ukraine), Zsolt Visy (Hungary), Alexander Petrov (Belarus), Stuart Eizenstat (USA), Maria Schaumayer (Austria), Wolfgang Schüssel (Austria), Kathryn Hall (US Ambassador), Jan Kavan (Czech Republic), Jerzy Kranz (Poland).

Source: Hopi-Media/Bernhard J. Holzner



The Morality of the Generation of Heirs

Excerpts from the Speeches at the Signing Ceremony on October 24, 2000

We Austrians are finally looking the historic truth in the face—the whole truth. In past years we have recognized that this was long overdue ... At the end of the 20th century we are finally starting to remove the last obstacles on our path toward a better future, which is based on a shared commitment to the principle "Never again!"

President Thomas Klestil

I am painfully aware that this financial gesture can never compensate for having been robbed of years of one's life, of one's happiness, health and independence. Ultimately, no money in the world can replace what was forcefully taken from these people ... We have to admit that the Second Republic has very often acted in a dilatory fashion in questions of restitution, compensation and material redress. However, neither do I want to take the easy way out and just criticize the decisions and above all the failures of previous governments from a safe distance, decades later. ... At that time, a feeling of moral responsibility to provide compensation for forced laborers was certainly lacking. One did of course realize the pain and injustice that had been

inflicted on these people, but perceived the responsibility for what had happened to be solely a matter for the Nazi regime that had destroyed Austria as an independent state. It took far too long to face the facts. There was denial and repression. On the other hand, it would be unfair not to recognize that in recent years much has changed in the way we deal with our history, also due to the efforts of many of our MPs.

Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel

Why should an Austrian Reconciliation Fund make voluntary payments if it is beyond dispute that there was no Austrian state ... Even if Austria does not bear any legal responsibility as a state for the blatant injustice that took place, it behooves us to recognize a moral responsibility for what happened then—and this view is shared by a large majority of the Austrian population. Victims and perpetrators often lived side by side as neighbors ... It is not just in Austria, but also in other countries, that the question is asked: What does the affluent generation enjoying life today have to do with the horrors of yesteryear. In my opinion, they might reflect upon the fact that they

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are the generation of heirs—for better or for worse.

Without forced laborers in agriculture hunger in the war years would have been much worse and some children might either not have been born or would not have survived. Without the forced laborers, Austria would not have had the basis upon which it was able to develop a flourishing tourist industry as soon as it regained its freedom. But even the military-industrial complex with its destructive purpose did not just leave behind ruins, but propelled Austria a step further toward becoming a modern industrialized nation, so that with the help of

the Marshall Plan we were able to reach prosperity more rapidly.

The Austrian Parliament gave the Fund established to make voluntary payments the name Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Cooperation. ... That is not an admission of collective guilt, but a self-confident and yet humble expression of respect in the face of human suffering that would not stop at the destruction of human dignity or even life itself. ... May this be the guiding principle for the new millennium!

*Special Representative of the Austrian
Government Maria Schaumayer*

Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, Special Representative of the Austrian Government Maria Schaumayer, President Heinz Kessler acting on behalf of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and Platform Humanitarian Action established by industry, and by almost all the plaintiffs' lawyers. The latter undertook to withdraw all lawsuits they had filed. According to Winkler "the legal nature of this document is uncertain. It is not an instrument of international law, possibly a contract under private law, but ultimately it is probably more a matter of political and moral rather than legal obligations." The historic act was celebrated with speeches (see box, The Morality of the Generation of Heirs). Eizenstat thanked Schüssel for his "inspired leadership" and his "wonderful colleague Maria Schaumayer, a great Austrian patriot" for her efforts.

A festive final act held the same day at the Hofburg, the seat of the Austrian president, was marked by speeches by President Klestil and Secretary Eizenstat, who also read the letter from President Clinton. Most of the



plaintiff's lawyers were also present at this ceremony. To their credit, and to refute any speculation, it should also be said that their fees were modest in comparison with those usually received in class action suits (with lawyers receiving nothing in the case of failure, but up to 30 or 40 percent of the damages awarded), namely 1.25 percent of the six billion schillings for forced laborers, i.e. 75 million schillings, now 5.44 million euros. As Ambassador Hans Winkler said, considering that the lawyers had worked for several years without seeing any money, had undertaken research trips and employed historians, archivists and other legal experts, the sum of money to be divided between some two dozen people was "really not excessive for so many years of hard work."

The final ceremony at the Vienna Hofburg was also attended by Maria Sterf—a former forced laborer who had remained in Austria and who had long since acquired Austrian citizenship. Two days later, on October 26, 2000, the Austrians celebrated their national holiday. This was introduced in 1955 when the country regained its independence and sovereignty, and now the Austrians were able to hoist their red-white-red flags in the knowledge that they had at least made a symbolic contribution to confronting a shameful past.



CHAPTER 8

»A Law as a Voluntary Gesture«

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Reconciliation, Peace and Cooperation

The Austrian Federal Law Concerning the Fund for Voluntary Payments by the Republic of Austria to Former Slave Laborers and Forced Laborers of the National Socialist Regime (Reconciliation Fund Law) was promulgated on August 8, 2000, in Federal Law Gazette No. 74/2000 and came into force on November 27, 2000, as announced by the Federal government on December 1, 2000, in Federal Law Gazette No. 122/2000. The law had been drafted in consultation with the foreign governments concerned, the victims' associations and foundations of the Central and East European states, as well as with Austrian victims' associations, the Austrian Jewish Community (IKG), the lawyers of victims and corporate defendants and had been unanimously passed by both chambers of the Austrian Parliament. The wording of the law had been formulated by an inter-ministerial working party headed by Maria Schaumayer, and due to the extensive correspondence conducted by her office with former forced laborers, it had been possible to take account of their wishes and experiences in the drafting process.


Section 1 of the law states that the purpose of the Reconciliation Fund, which had been established as a legal entity for charitable purposes only, was to provide "payments to former slave laborers and forced laborers of the Nazi regime on the territory of present-day Austria." These payments were to be understood as "a voluntary gesture" because no claim could be brought against the Republic under international law. The Fund's full name, Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Cooperation (Reconciliation Fund) had first been proposed by Maria Schaumayer, who wanted it to express not only a willingness to critically confront the past, but also the goal of European integration—peace and cooperation. The question whether those who offer compensation for injustice can also be the first to offer reconciliation was the cause of some initial debate. Eventually, however, this name was chosen just the same.



Payments from the Fund's capital assets were to be made in four amounts:

- » Forced laborers as defined by the law were persons transported by force or by deception to work on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria, or who after a voluntary stay on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria were prevented from returning home, and who were forced to carry out labor under particularly poor living conditions—either in confinement or similar accommodation, and who were deprived of their personal rights or subjected to particularly severe disciplinary measures (all definitions of forced labor categories are laid down in Section 2 of the law). Voluntary compensation of 20,000 schillings (1,453 euros) was paid to persons who had carried out forced labor in agriculture or in the form of personal service in households and hotels, etc. (the amounts of compensation, which are based on the German Foundation Law, are set out in Section 3 of the law). Forced laborers who had been employed in industry, business, construction, power companies and other commercial enterprises, public institutions, rail transportation or the postal service received 35,000 schillings (2,543 euros). The difference in the amounts of compensation is explained by the harsher working conditions, confinement in guarded camps and greater exposure to danger from Allied air raids (industrial workers were not permitted to enter air raid shelters).

- » Slave laborers as defined by the law were persons who while under detention were forced to work in a concentration camp or in a similar place of confinement under inhumane conditions on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria. The law does not apply to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp in Upper Austria and its satellites, or satellite camps of Dachau Concentration Camp (near Munich) that were located in Austria. This was because individuals who had been imprisoned here were covered by the German Foundation. A list of camps on Austrian territory that were deemed to be equivalent to concentration camps was contained in an annex to the law. In terms of whether labor was recognized as slave labor, it was irrelevant whether it had been carried out at the concentration camp itself or the concentration camp prisoners had been taken to factories or other places of work. Explicit recognition as slave laborers was given to forced laborers from camps



for Hungarian Jews in Vienna, Lower Austria, Burgenland and Styria (Strasshof, Laxenburg, etc.), from transit camps for Roma and Sinti (Lackenbach, Salzburg-Maxglan, etc.) and to the majority of inmates of work training camps (AEL), whereby their working conditions were examined on an individual basis. Slave laborers received payments of 105,000 schillings (7,630 euros).

- » Special Hardship could be claimed by forced laborers who did not meet all the legal criteria for forced labor (such as deportation or limitation of their freedom), but who suffered demonstrably severe and lasting physical or psychological damage (such as work-related accidents). In practice, however, such claimants already met the criteria laid down in the same paragraph of the law (Section 2), so that this provision never had to be used.
- » Children or minors under the age of 12, who had been deported together with their parents were awarded the same amount to which the deported father or mother was entitled. If both parents had been deported and were entitled to different amounts of compensation, the child would be awarded the higher amount. It was assumed that these children had not been compelled to work themselves, but had suffered a similar trauma as their parents as a result of the forced deportation. If a child had been forced to work, which was generally the case as soon as they reached the age of twelve, they were entitled to compensation payments in their own right based on the category of work they had performed, either 20,000, 35,000 or 105,000 schillings.
- » Forced laborers and slave laborers who during their time as forced laborers gave birth to children in maternity facilities for Eastern workers or who were forced to undergo abortions were awarded a supplementary payment of 5,000 schillings (363 euros) for each birth or abortion.
- » Eligible persons under the terms of the law also included individuals who had been coerced by the National Socialist regime into work for political reasons, reasons of ancestry, religion, nationality, sexual orientation (such as homosexuals), physical or mental handicap or accusation of supposed anti-social behavior. The law also recognized as eligible claimants victims who had been forced into work at institutions connected



with the Euthanasia Program (such as Spiegelgrund in Vienna) or who had been so badly mistreated that they were no longer able to work. All these circumstances were regarded as equivalent to imprisonment or other significant limitations of freedom. The duration of the forced labor was immaterial for the award of compensation. Persons who had been employed in several categories of forced labor (such as industrial workers used for harvesting) were to be awarded the highest amount applicable.

- » Prisoners of war were not eligible for compensation because international law permitted them to be set to work. Other ineligible groups included prisoners of war who were not designated as such by the Third Reich for other reasons pertaining to international law (such as Italian military internees, see chapter 3) or whose status was changed to civilian workers.

Claim Periods and Partner Organizations

The law explicitly states that it does not confer any legal right to payment and does not affect Article 21 of the State Treaty under which Austria would not be required to pay reparations, nor Article 26, which obliged it to either return looted property or, if this was not possible, to provide compensation. The same Section 4 also emphasizes that payments from the Reconciliation Fund are strictly personal and are to be applied for as such, are not to be given or taken as security for a loan, must be allowed only if the petitioner through documentation or otherwise makes a credible claim to fulfillment of the conditions and may only be claimed by heirs if the person who had been coerced into labor had died on or after 15 February 2000 (the day on which the Government Special Representative was appointed). If an eligible person died between the German and the Austrian cut-off dates (15 February 1999 and 2000), the heirs could apply to the German Foundation for compensation even if the forced labor had been performed in Austria. The claim period for all applications was originally supposed to end on November 27, 2002, but was subsequently extended until September, 27, 2003 and once again until December 31, 2003.



Applications could either be handled by a partner organization in one of the six countries with which Austria had concluded bilateral treaties, or directly by the Reconciliation Fund (Section 7). Partner organizations are:

- » the foundation Understanding and Reconciliation in Minsk, the capital of the Republic of Belarus (formerly White Russia),
- » the foundation German-Polish Reconciliation in Warsaw,
- » the foundation Understanding and Reconciliation in Moscow,
- » the Czech Council for the Victims of National Socialism in Prague,
- » the National Foundation Understanding and Reconciliation in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, and
- » the foundation Jewish Legacy in Budapest, Hungary.

The Reconciliation Fund was to remain in constant contact with the German foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future in Berlin in order to ensure that no applications were mislaid as a result of bureaucratic paper-shuffling, but also that no claims were met twice.

This Time Everyone Heard

One of the criticisms leveled against the compensation payments made by the Republic of Austria at the end of the war was that many of the claim periods were too short and that many of those who were eligible for payment never heard about the schemes. No such accusations can be brought against the Austrian Reconciliation Fund. Section 7 of the law explicitly required the Fund and its partner organizations to give worldwide publicity to the payments offered within two months of the law coming into force. In accordance with this mandate, the Reconciliation Fund or its foreign partner organizations, and sometimes both, placed announce-

ments in newspapers, held press conferences and gave interviews. Austrian diplomatic missions abroad and the foreign trade organization of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber also participated in this widespread publicity campaign.

An Austrian Reconciliation Fund poster in eleven languages—English, German, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Hebrew, Albanian, Croatian, Romanian, Serbian and Slovakian—was created and detailed plans drawn up in cooperation with local organizations for its worldwide distribution. Austria's partner organizations also made their own contribution to publicizing the law with a wide range of measures. Furthermore, Austria initiated a number of other campaigns that led to direct contact with victims or to them receiving information through victims' organizations (this method was particularly successful in Israel and Slovenia, but also in the USA):

» in Australia, paid newspaper announcements were placed in the *Herald Sun* and *Daily Telegraph Mirror* in five periods between May 2001 and November 2003;

Fonds de réconciliation autrichien

Prestations aux personnes soumises au travail d'esclavage et au travail forcé par le régime national-socialiste sur le territoire de l'Autriche actuelle.

Le Fonds de réconciliation autrichien prévoit des prestations sur une base volontaire aux personnes soumises au travail d'esclavage et au travail forcé par le régime national-socialiste sur le territoire de l'Autriche actuelle.

Conditions requises pour bénéficier d'une telle prestation :

a) Travailleurs forcés

Ont droit de prétendre à de tels versements les personnes ayant été astreintes au travail forcé par le régime national-socialiste sur le territoire de l'Autriche actuelle dans les secteurs suivants : industrie, économie, institutions publiques ou agriculture.

Ont également le droit de prétendre à de tels versements les personnes ayant été astreintes au travail forcé par le régime national-socialiste sur le territoire de l'Autriche actuelle pour des raisons politiques ou liées à l'origine, la religion, la nationalité, leur penchant sexuel, un handicap physique ou mental, leur soi-disant comportement asocial ou dans le cadre d'expériences médicales.

b) Travailleurs esclaves

Ont droit de prétendre à de tels versements les personnes ayant été astreintes au travail d'es-

Advertisements such as this one were placed in newspapers all over the world to draw attention to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund's compensation scheme.

Source: *Le Soir*, 12/22/2001

- » in Eastern Central Europe and South East Europe, the distribution of posters was accompanied by paid advertisements in the best-selling newspapers in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo, and in Macedonia and Albania as well as by television and radio spots. Public appearances and press conferences were also held on several occasions in Belgrade, Nis, Podgorica, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Priština, Gracanica, Caglavica (both towns in Kosovo) and in Tirana;
- » in the Baltic states, measures included press conferences in Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn and paid announcements in Lithuanian newspapers between December 2001 and November 2003;
- » in Belarus, press conferences on the occasion of a number of payments;



» in Belgium, paid announcements between May 2001 and November 2003;

» in France, radio and television interviews as well as 17 paid announcements, press releases to the five largest national and 30 local newspapers, public presentations of checks in Paris and Marseille;

» in Great Britain, check presentation ceremonies in London, a BBC radio interview and four paid announcements in *The Times*, *Polish Daily* and *Sunday Gazette*;

Austrian Reconciliation Fund poster: This poster was printed in eleven languages to publicize the Fund's work.
Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

» in Greece, one check presentation and four paid announcements;

- » in Israel, five paid announcements in four newspapers;
- » in Italy, press conferences in Rome, Milan and Naples, paid announcements in six newspapers, information at all government offices in South Tyrol;
- » in Canada, press conferences in Toronto and Vancouver as well as paid announcements in two newspapers;
- » in Latin America, paid announcements in newspapers in Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Bolivia and Peru as well as a radio spot in Argentina;
- » in the Netherlands, check presentation ceremonies and newspaper announcements, some of which were even paid for by the Dutch government (in *De Telegraaf* and *Algemeen Dagblad*);
- » in Norway, paid newspaper announcements were placed five times;



The Committee of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund (from left to right): Mag. Maximilian Kothbauer, Dr. Claudia Schmied, Dr. Christoph Kainz, Ambassador Dr. Ludwig Steiner and Dr. Friedrich Wennig.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

- » in Austria, paid advertisements in all daily and major weekly newspapers and publications of victims' organizations. There was also a widely publicized ceremony in Kaprun to unveil a plaque donated by Österreichische Elektrizitätswirtschaft AG commemorating those forced laborers who had died during the construction of the power plant in the war years;
- » in Poland, there were several check presentation ceremonies and press conferences in Warsaw and Krakow. The Reconciliation Fund also took part in a commemorative ceremony in Warsaw to which it had been invited in recognition of the fact that Austria had classed individuals who had been deported for participation in the Warsaw Uprising as forced laborers and not as prisoners of war;
- » in Romania, announcements in eight newspapers (for Romanian, Hungarian and German speakers) and on the radio;
- » in Russia, a check presentation ceremony in Moscow and four paid newspaper announcements;



The chairman of the Committee of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, Ambassador Ludwig Steiner, handing over a check in Moscow.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund



- » in Slovakia, a press conference in Bratislava and paid announcements in newspapers and on a Hungarian-language radio station;
- » in the Czech Republic, a check presentation ceremony in Prague and paid newspaper announcements;
- » in Ukraine, two check presentations with press conferences in Kiev and paid newspaper announcements;
- » in Hungary, a check presentation ceremony and a press conference in Budapest. The Secretary of State for Roma and Sinti also wrote a letter to their victims' organizations and self-governing bodies;
- » in the USA, radio and television interviews, paid announcements in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today* and in other (non English-language) newspapers, radio spots on many radio stations. Information was also placed on the website of the *Washington Post*, which is generally accessed by more than 1.5 million readers. Checks were presented and press conferences held in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, and the Newsletter of the Jewish Claims Conference in New York and the Consulate General of Serbia and Montenegro in Chicago offered information about the compensation offered by the Austrian Reconciliation Fund.

Waiver of Claims, Administrative Costs and Fund Organs

All individuals whose claims were recognized under the terms of the law were required to make a declaration irrevocably waiving any further claims against Austria and Germany and against businesses in these countries. This waiver and the fact that forced labor carried out both in German territory and what is now the territory of Austria was only compensated once (Section 4) were occasionally met with a lack of understanding and antagonism. However, the reasons were always clear. Claims were to be recognized on the basis of working conditions and not borders, and without a guarantee of future legal peace, it would have been impossible to raise



On December 20, 2004, the Board of Trustees of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund (from right to left: Secretary General Richard Wotava; Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel the chairman of the Board of Trustees; Committee Chairman Ludwig Steiner) were able to present positive results: All applications had been dealt with, a decision made about what to do with the remaining money.

Source: Hopi-Media/Bernhard J. Holzner

the money. After all, the Austrian state, Austrian industry and the nine federal provinces had all contributed to the six billion schillings (436 million euros) in a fund-raising campaign that had not been easy. As always in such cases, all amounts were exempt from taxes and other deductions. The report to the Austrian Nationalrat by the relevant parliamentary committee stipulated that the administrative costs for processing applications (such as personnel and material expenses including all publicity measures) would be based on the maximum limit of 5.5 percent of the total sum envisaged in the Swiss solution. In fact, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund succeeded in covering these costs entirely from the interest generated from the six billion schillings and was even able to allocate some of this interest to the Fund's capital, which benefited forced laborers from the Nazi period. Importantly, the law also contained a provision stipulating that compensation payments to a forced laborer were not to lead to any reduction of payments made under the social security and health insurance systems in his or her present country of residence (Section 8). Under the terms of the law, the governing bodies of the Fund were the Board of Trustees, the Committee and the Secretary General.



» **The Board of Trustees** under the chairmanship of the Austrian chancellor is the supreme organ of the Reconciliation Fund (Section 12) and has 23 members: four government representatives (Wolfgang Schüssel, Hans Winkler, Werner Pollak and Martin Eichtinger), one representative of each of the parties represented in the Nationalrat (Ulrike Baumgartner-Gabitzer from the ÖVP, Elisabeth Hlavac—subsequently replaced by Christine Lapp—from the SPÖ, Michael Krüger from the FPÖ and Terezija Stoisits from the Green Party), one representative of the nine provincial governors (Anton Eggendorfer), three business representatives (Heinz Kessler, Wolfgang Eder or Markus Geier, Hans Haider), one representative each of the Austrian Working Group of Concentration Camp Associations and Resistance Fighters (Alfred Ströer), the Documentation Center of the Alliance of Jewish Victims of Persecution (Anton Winter, subsequently Joanna Nittenberg) and the Head of the Cultural Association of Austrian Roma Peoples (Rudolf Sarközi), one representative each of the governments of Belarus (Vladimir Lokis, later Valentin Gerassimov), Poland (Jan Barcz), Russia (Alexander Potshinok), the Czech Republic (Miroslav Kunstat), Ukraine (Igor M. Luschnikov), Hungary (János Fónagy) and the USA (Lee A. Brudvig, and later Arkell Daniel Weygandt) as well as a lawyer delegated by the US government (Martin Mendelsohn). The Board of Trustees therefore included eleven members from Austrian public institutions and the business community and eleven members representing the interests of victims (in the event of a tied vote, the final decision would have rested with the chancellor but this situation never arose). The Board of Trustees also had to approve rules of procedure, guidelines for the award of compensation payments, financial regulations, audit and control mechanisms, the establishment of a Committee and semi-annual reports to the government.

» **The Committee of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund** (Section 13) was responsible for the day-to-day management of the Fund. The Committee is composed of the chairperson of the Board of Trustees or a representative named by such as chairperson (from the outset, this was Ludwig Steiner, a former deputy foreign minister and retired ambassador), a deputy and three additional members—all named by the Board of Trustees. Christoph Kainz, executive officer of the business initiative Platform Humanitarian Action, was appointed deputy chairman, other



members of the Committee were Max Kothbauer, a former director general of Österreichische Postsparkasse, Claudia Schmid, a member of the Management Board of Kommunalkredit AG and the lawyer Friedrich Wennig.

- » **The Chairman of the Committee**, Ludwig Steiner, was born in Innsbruck in 1922. After graduating from high school, he was conscripted into the German Wehrmacht. From 1943 until the end of the war, he was actively involved in the Austrian resistance. After completing a PhD in economics, he joined the Austrian diplomatic service in 1948 and soon became deputy to Foreign Minister Karl Gruber and then to Chancellor Julius Raab. In 1955, he participated in the Moscow negotiations leading to the State Treaty (where he suggested the introduction of a temporary special tax to provide a symbolic amount of compensation for all victims of National Socialism—an idea that was not taken up at the time). During the course of his diplomatic career, he served in Paris, Sofia and Athens and was a member of parliament for eleven years. Steiner was also Chairman of the Political Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and is still a member of the Executive Committee of the Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance.

- » **The Secretary General** is the executive officer of the Reconciliation Fund (Section 14) and prepares all resolutions of the Committee and Board of Trustees and provides administrative support. Chancellor Schüssel proposed the seasoned diplomat Richard Wotava for this post. Born in 1933, Richard Wotava holds a doctorate in law and joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1956. During the course of his career, he served in Rome, Tel Aviv, Athens, held the post of ambassador in Caracas, Warsaw and Madrid and was also Austria's Permanent Representative at the UN and UNIDO in Vienna. After his retirement, he was appointed Austrian Coordinator for the Stability Pact in South East Europe (the current EU coordinator is the former Austrian vice chancellor Erhard Busek).

The exemplary management of the Reconciliation Fund by Ambassadors Steiner and Wotava following their retirement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a crowning achievement in lives dedicated to the service of their country.



An Office with First-Class Personnel

The Reconciliation Fund law was to come into force as soon as it had been confirmed that the fund capital was available, in other words that legally binding promises had at least been received, and as soon as the bilateral agreements with the USA and those states in which partner organizations had been established were signed (Section 17). Following the belated signing of the agreement with Russia on November 27, 2000, these conditions were then satisfied. On December 1, 2000, an exchange of notes brought the Executive Agreement with the USA into force, so that on December 20, the Board of Trustees of the Reconciliation Fund was able to constitute itself. Since then, the Board has met at least twice a year at the Federal Chancellery, with all written and oral proceedings in German being translated into English and Russian. At the first meeting, Maria Schaubmayer was discharged from her responsibilities as special representative with a unanimous expression of deep gratitude and was decorated with the Grand Decoration of Honor in Gold with Sash by the President, the highest honor the Republic can bestow. The Board of Trustees also appointed the Chairperson of the Committee, the members of which all worked in an honorary capacity, and the Secretary General of the Reconciliation Fund, who immediately started setting up an office. In terms of the practical work involved, Secretary General Richard Wotava was entering new territory. While he had held positions of great responsibility both during his career and after his retirement, as a civil servant he had always worked within defined structures. Now, he had to build up a completely new office, because the rooms in the Hofburg previously occupied by the Special Representative could henceforth only be used as interim quarters. In addition, first-class personnel needed to be recruited and supplied with cutting-edge communications technology that could also be used with a wide range of languages, some of them rare ones. The secretary general, who as a high-ranking diplomat was used to continuously having to fight for smaller sums of money, was suddenly responsible for the careful management of almost half a billion euros. The Austrian Federal Financing Agency, which is responsible for managing federal assets, helped invest these funds, a decision noted with approval by KPMG Austria GmbH Alpentreuhand, the firm responsible for auditing the office of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund each year.



The head of a spot-check team Ambassador Erich Schmid (second from left) with the representative of the Polish partner organization (first left); the Linz historian Hermann Rafetseder (first right) repeatedly provided valuable services when it came to examining applications in more detail.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

An office was finally set up in a suitable building in Vienna's inner city district (Rotenturmstrasse 16–18, 3rd floor) and on March 5, 2001, the Fund moved in. The elderly and frail people who would come to the office were not to be confronted with any unreasonable obstacles. The entire staff—young, multilingual men and women with a broad education, poise and a knowledge of all those countries, at least in Europe, in which applicants now reside—were selected after detailed suitability interviews with the secretary general. The Fund started its work with a staff of three employees and one freelancer, subsequently expanding the team to 16 full-time employees and seven part-time employees in 2001, which was later increased to 13 in 2002. The secretary general, the desk officers and three secretaries had fixed employment contracts. The part-time employees were mainly students and those employees who were responsible for organizational procedures. Finally, there was a historian employed on the basis of a flat-rate fee and the individuals who examined applications, whose expenses were reimbursed on an ad hoc basis.



Representatives of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund at the negotiating table with representatives of the partner organizations (from left) from Belarus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia, Ukraine and Poland.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

Work was both time consuming and strenuous, and in fact became more rather than less so over time, as most of the applications received in the first year were documented, while many of those subsequently submitted required investigation in order to establish the veracity of their claims.

Such a wide variety of tasks of course required a large and powerful data processing system with a database that permitted all types of comparisons and cross checks (a Fabasoft Components solution was selected). One of the secretary general's first personnel decisions was therefore to hire Johannes Benedikter, an experienced computer specialist. With his outstanding technical competence and exemplary willingness to cooperate with all members of the Fund's staff, he soon became a key member of the team. His countless innovative suggestions for improvements strongly influenced the way the Reconciliation Fund worked. Without him, the Fund would never have been able to carry out its duties with the human resources it had at its disposal. A Fund website in German and English (www.versoehnungsfonds.at and www.reconciliationfund.at) went on line on December 20, 2000, the day on which the Fund was constituted.



Money Cannot Compensate **From the Committee Report of the Austrian Nationalrat**

In its unbelievably inhuman ways, the National Socialist regime caused infinitely great suffering to millions of people. Austria, which was occupied on March 13, 1938, by Hitler Germany, did not exist as a state during the war years. It must not be denied, however, that Austrians were also involved in the horrendous crimes of the National Socialist regime.

The Holocaust, but also slave labor and forced labor, were expressions of a horrible disrespect for human rights and involved deportation of people of all age groups, deprivation of their rights, enslavement, mistreatment, abuse of their human dignity, and, in many cases, extermination through work. Many of those affected could never in their later lives overcome the trauma of deportation...

The Austrian Federal Government and the Austrian National Council are con-

scious of the fact that the suffering and humiliation of the victims of the crimes of the National Socialist regime, which include above all the prisoners in concentration camps who were coerced to work (so-called slave laborers) and the civilian workers who were deported to the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria or who were detained here against their will and forced to work (forced laborers), cannot be made up for with money.

Through the voluntary payments to be made under this law, Austria acknowledges the suffering of the victims of slave labor and forced labor who were exploited to contribute to the economy of that time, the effects of this contribution still being felt today in some cases. For the victims, the place where this happened was Austria, even though it did not exist at the time.

In a first step, agreements were concluded in a record five weeks with the six partner organizations in Central and Eastern Europe regarding the form of future cooperation and approved at a meeting of the Board of Trustees on June 8, 2001. Fund representatives visited the German Foundation in Berlin, the International Tracing Service of the Red Cross in Bad Arolsen and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in



Geneva in order to discuss, and whenever possible immediately agree upon, joint approaches to the categorization of forced labor. At the same time, meetings were also held with the coordinators appointed by the nine Austrian provinces and other partners in Austria. Then all attention was focused on achieving legal peace.

Money for 20,000 People on the First Day

From the outset, the management the Reconciliation Fund office was determined to use the period in which legal peace had not yet been guaranteed to prepare thoroughly for the first payments. The partner organizations were therefore invited to submit lists of former slave and forced laborers that were then spot checked in the office by teams headed by retired ambassadors Herbert Grubmayr and Erich Schmid and then broadly approved by the Committee. As there was nothing that could serve as a model for the Reconciliation Fund's work, efficient working mechanisms were developed in a joint endeavor in which all members of the team, but particularly the Chief of Staff Wolfgang Renezeder and his deputy Ulrike Dirisamer, distinguished themselves with their ingenuity.

This achievement was also acknowledged by the auditing firm KPMG Austria GmbH Alpentreuhand, which noted in several of its reports that "the operational processes developed by the office of the Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Cooperation both for carrying out spot checks at partner organizations and processing direct applications, as well as the controls for internal and external relationships must be regarded as goal-oriented and highly effective." Applicants were also soon to be pleasantly surprised by this effectiveness.

In summer 2001, there were still two lawsuits pending against the Republic of Austria and Austrian companies in the USA: the Anderman case in California and the Whiteman suit in New York. The Anderman case was dismissed by the District Court of the Central District of California in the first instance on April 15, 2003, in accordance with the Statement of Interest given by the US government. However, it had only concerned res-



Endowing the Fund

According to the audit carried out by Wirtschaftsprüfungs- und Steuerberatungsgesellschaft Alpen-Treuhand, the funds raised for the Austrian Reconciliation Fund as of December 13, 2003 were broken down as follows:

Republic of Austria:	268,889,486 euros
Provinces:	36,336,494 euros
Austrian business:	133,750,279 euros
Other donations (mainly by three Roman Catholic dioceses):	277,828 euros
Total:	439,254,087 euros

If one recalls that the contribution of the Republic was partly raised by skimming off surplus funds from the Insolvenztgeltsicherungsfonds, which is financed by employers' contributions, then it becomes clear that at least fifty percent of the funding was contributed by Austrian business.

titution issues and not forced labor. The Whiteman suit had been referred back to the District Court of the District of New York by a court of appeal and concerned forced laborers and Aryanization victims. The Austrian Jewish Community (IKG) had as a matter of basic principle joined the suit as an amicus curiae (as a third party that, because its interests could be affected by the decision of the court, takes part in legal proceedings without itself being a party). This highly sensitive situation was resolved on July 25 by New York judge Shirley Wohl-Kram, who dismissed the part of the suit pertaining to forced laborers. In a letter to the Chairman of the Committee, Ludwig Steiner, on July 31, 2001, Chancellor Schüssel was therefore able to declare that legal peace had been achieved. On the same day, the Secretary General of the Fund, Mr. Wotava, instructed that the first bank transfers be made to no fewer than 20,398 people, who only a few days later had the money in their hands!



Ambassador Herbert Grubmayr, head of one of the two spot-check teams, with Igor Nikolaievich Lushnikov at the office of the Ukrainian foundation in Kiev.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

This well-prepared, sudden and unexpected action, which attracted much deserved positive publicity in Austria and abroad, formed a solid basis for the many compliments Austria subsequently received for the speedy, reliable and effective processing of compensation payments from the Reconciliation Fund. The Austrian and foreign media were astonished that so many cases had already been dealt with before legal peace was established, so that payments could be made on the first possible date.

Jiří Šitler, for example, the Special Representative for the Compensation of Czech Nazi victims, declared that Austria had skillfully learned the lessons from Germany's experiences and had therefore been able to act more rapidly, "and in the result, the definitions of the Austrian law correspond far more closely to historical reality and in practice, the law is easier to apply."

German Foundation—Austrian Fund

The Legal Differences between the Two Instruments

- » The German Foundation Law includes a preamble that recognizes a political and moral responsibility for the victims of National Socialism. In Austria, this acknowledgement was made in the Parliamentary Committee Report.
- » The German Foundation was established for an indefinite period, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund will cease to exist at the end of 2005.
- » Unlike the Austrian Fund, the capital assets of the German Foundation (10 billion deutsche marks [DEM], approximately 4.1 billion euros) are carefully divided between the different categories of victim: DEM 8.1 billion for slave and forced laborers, DEM 50 million for other personal injuries, DEM 1 billion for property losses, DEM 700 million for the projects of the Remembrance and Future Fund.
- » The German compensation payments were awarded solely by the partner organizations, which were allocated fixed amounts. Austrian payments were awarded both by partner organizations and by the Fund itself.
- » Austria compensated forced laborers employed in the agricultural sector without exception. Germany only did so if the partner organizations had sufficient resources after having compensated other groups ("enabling clause"). Austria also compensated children and adolescents who had been deported with their parents as well as mothers who had given birth during their periods of forced labor or who had been forced to have an abortion.
- » Austria without exception granted one-time payments. Germany granted an initial payment to be followed by a second installment, the amount of which would depend on how much money remained once all the applications had been dealt with.
- » The Austrian Reconciliation Fund Law established objective criteria, while the German Foundation Law gave priority to those victims' groups "who had to endure particular hardship" during the Nazi period.
- » Prisoners of war, including Italian military internees (IMI), were not eligible in either country, but could make claims in Germany if they had been forced to work in concentration camps (including Mauthausen).
- » The closing dates for applications (Dec. 31, 2001, in Germany, Dec. 31, 2003, in Austria) and cut-off dates (Feb. 15, 1999, and Feb. 15, 2000) varied.



Soviet Citizens: Filtration Papers Helped

The office of the Reconciliation Fund dealt with two types of applications: those that had been forwarded as collective lists by the partner organizations and those that applicants had submitted to the Reconciliation Fund directly. Ten to fifteen percent of the cases from each of the lists forwarded by the partner organizations were selected for spot checks and examined by a three- or four-member Reconciliation Fund spot-checking team at the headquarters of the partner organizations. "In this manner, we inspected between 6,000 and 8,000 files in the countries of the former Soviet Union," says the former ambassador Herbert Grubmayr, who together with another retired ambassador, Erich Schmid, headed the random checks of the applications submitted by the partner organizations. Grubmayr was responsible for checks in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, Schmid for those in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The verification process in the former Soviet Union was made more difficult not least of all because many former forced laborers had thrown away their papers when they noticed that the Communist rulers had started accusing them of collaborating with the Hitler regime and re-imprisoning them in internment and forced-labor camps.

The establishment of "filtration camps" by Stalin at the suggestion of his interior minister Beria has already been described in chapter 4 (Every Case a Tragic Fate). In these camps (of which there were at least 159), people who had been deported to Germany and were subsequently liberated by the Red Army, as well as people who had been handed over to the Soviet Union by the Western powers, were vetted (filtrated) to see if they were worthy to return to their homes or whether they ought to be imprisoned again for collaboration with the enemy. Many of them were sentenced to precisely this punishment. One has to imagine it: the Germans carry someone off from his own country to theirs, one of the Western armies frees him, and then hands him over to the Communist rulers of his country who, instead of allowing him to return home to a jubilant reception as a liberated victim, victimize him for a second time and deport him once again, this time to the other end of the world, to Siberia! However, fate was now merciful to these unfortunate people. If they had thrown away their papers out of fear of betrayal, but had still suffered renewed perse-



The archive of the Ukrainian foundation with applications from forced laborers from the province of Odessa: Files were stacked high like this at many offices of the partner organizations of the Reconciliation Fund.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

cution in Communist territories, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund was willing to accept documents from filtration camps as proof of their eligibility for compensation. The partner organizations in these countries also gave more credence to such evidence than to "fascist documents" from the Nazi period. Some 60,000 people were able to document their eligibility to receive compensation on the basis of filtration papers. Ambassador Grubmayr, who had started learning Russian in 1945 while still at school and perfected his knowledge of the language while serving as a secretary at the Austrian Embassy in Moscow (1955–1958) and then as Ambassador to the Soviet Union (1985–1990), found an old atlas with Cyrillic lettering extremely useful for verifying the place names in the former Soviet Union provided in some applications. His work in the Estonian capital Tallinn as Head of the Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), then at the OSCE mission in Albania and finally as Deputy Head of the EU Monitoring Mission in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo also gave Grubmayr a familiarity with former Communist countries that was extremely helpful for his verification work for the Reconciliation Fund.



Poland and Czech Republic: Great Differences

Retired ambassador Erich Maximilian Schmid, who in addition to a doctorate in law from the University of Vienna also holds a master of arts from Chicago, supervised the spot checks in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In addition, he dealt with direct applications from Germany, the majority of which were submitted by German Sinti who had carried out forced labor on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria. Moreover, a considerable number of Jews originally from Vienna and former forced laborers from Central and Eastern Europe now live in Germany. Initially, Schmid also processed applications from Austrian Jews now living in Israel. His experiences sometimes stood in sharp contrast to those of his colleague Grubmayr.

The majority of the approximately 21,000 forced laborers from Poland who were still able to submit applications had worked in the agricultural sector, something most of them were able to document as they had been forced to pay social insurance contributions and the old documents are still available. In other cases, the remains of the work cards that forced laborers always had to carry with them had to be reconstructed in detailed detective work. The issue of new identity cards to all Poles in the 1950s proved to be an advantage for former forced laborers who had no other documents, as the old application forms listed all places of employment during the war.

The main problem in connection with Polish applications concerned the fair categorization of applicants. The student assistants who compiled the application lists could not usually even read the entries in the German documents, which were written in old German cursive script. Furthermore, working under time pressure, they sometimes tended to simply place victims in the lowest category (agriculture). After the first spot checks, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund ordered a general review of all agricultural cases in the first lists. This, like decisions made by the independent appeals body of the Polish Foundation, resulted in applicants being moved up into the higher category of industry. Nevertheless, that still left some 75 percent of forced laborers in agriculture. "We examined at least 12 to 15 percent of all applications (the Germans only around two percent), and



Secretary General Ambassador Richard Wotava in conversation with Dariusz Pawlos from the foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation and a former forced laborer from Poland

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

all of those in the highest category," said Ambassador Schmid. In sharp contrast to this was the situation among the Czechs, a conspicuously large number of whom had been categorized as slave and industrial workers by the partner organization. However, this ratio reflected the Nazi statistics and there were logical reasons for it as well. Bohemia and Moravia had already been much more industrialized than Poland before the outbreak of the war. Czechs who had been condemned to forced labor tried to flee more frequently than people from other countries, as they were so much closer to home than were Poles, Russians or Ukrainians. However, if recaptured, they faced imprisonment in brutal work training camps (AEL) or prisons. The atmosphere during the first spot checks was rather frosty, but soon improved and eventually ended in friendly cooperation with the highly qualified Czech caseworkers. Approximately 80 percent of the more than 11,000 applicants were industrial workers, putting the Czech Republic at the top of this category. The Czech partner organization also had the largest percentage of slave laborers, exceeded only by the exceptional case of Hungary.



Hungarians and Romanians: Many Were Cheated Twice

There were surprises of a different nature in Hungary. Originally, it had been expected that most applications would be submitted by Jews deported to Austria to construct the South Eastern Defensive Wall. Their claims were fairly well documented by the partner organization Jewish Legacy, because all the survivors had contacted their Jewish Community. However, non-Jewish victims also soon emerged: Anabaptists who had refused to serve in the military, Communists who had been denounced and also a number of Lovara (members of a sub-group of the Roma, who in Hungary are still called *cigany*), and from whom a higher number of claims had originally been expected—or at least more than the approximately one hundred received in the first year. Of course, neither had anyone expected the almost 10,000 applications that suddenly landed on their desks.

No one was unrealistic enough to demand that these applicants submit papers as documentary evidence. Two witnesses and an attestation of the witness statement by the local self-governing bodies of the Lovara were to suffice. The Fund was generous and even recognized confirmations provided by close relatives. But should people who had been three years old at the time be able to confirm that someone who had been four had been a forced laborer, as was not infrequently the case? Was not even the Hungarian media making public accusations of fraud? Conversely, was not it manifestly obvious that unscrupulous fraudsters were getting poor Lovara to part with large sums of money by promising to obtain compensation for them, something which led to extensive police investigations and even a number of court cases? Did not the Hungarian parliament set up a sub-committee to investigate these accusations? The problem would subsequently reoccur in connection with Hungarian-speaking Roma in Transylvania in Romania. With the agreement of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund eventually dispatched the labor and social affairs attaché at the Austrian Embassy in Warsaw, Oliver Hiller, to the problem region. As well as speaking fluent Hungarian, he had also gained valuable experience in the area on past assignments. Working together with the local authorities for minority issues, he traveled to a dozen towns from where a large number of applications had been received to interview applicants or their relatives, and was consequently able to make a



decisive contribution to resolving several hundred cases, some positively, some negatively. Initially, the flood of belated applications from Romania was also accepted without hesitation. However, doubts grew once their number reached 5,000 and the dates of birth if nothing else showed that many applicants could not possibly qualify for compensation payments. The daily newspaper *România Liberă* published reports of criminal gangs who, for large "handling fees," promised to apply for the sums of 20,000 euros allegedly being offered, in exchange for an undertaking on the part of the applicant not to enter Austria in the next five years. Although the Austrian Reconciliation Fund immediately published the correct facts in the same newspaper, a further 10,000 applications that had absolutely nothing to do with forced labor were still submitted for welfare payments. This new harm inflicted on a people who had suffered repeated discrimination in the past was a particular challenge for Francesca Hortolomei, the desk officer who mainly handled applications from Romania. Hortolomei, who holds a law degree from the University of Vienna and in addition to German speaks fluent Romanian, French and English and also has a knowledge of Italian and Spanish, found that instead of delivering good news, she repeatedly had to calm the disappointed and comfort those who had been cheated. Her happiness was therefore all the greater when she was able to provide small pleasures to individuals who really had been involved in forced labor. "I recognized most of the real victims by the sadness in their voices," she recalls.

Listening and Working Little Miracles

In actual fact, the main task of the desk officers at the Viennese office was to carefully process all those individual cases submitted in the form of direct applications, mainly from countries in which there was no partner organization, but which could also be filed from any other country in the world. The standard procedure was that applicants who had submitted formless applications were sent a seven-page questionnaire that had been drawn up in fourteen different languages. The desk officer needed to be familiar with conditions particular to the relevant country in order to carry out further research and make enquiries effectively. This was especially

necessary when documents or other written material were missing, and in such cases much work was done by telephone. The law required all desk officers to take a "generous and unbureaucratic approach whenever possible," but the need to ensure that victims were categorized fairly necessitated specific research, particularly with regard to the type of forced labor and the circumstances under which it had taken place. Moreover, it soon became clear that what mattered most to those being questioned was the chance to talk, to finally, and in many cases for the first time, talk about their fate.

Berta Zukowitci, who was born in Uzbekistan in 1968 and emigrated to Israel in 1979, studied dentistry in Romania before moving to Austria in 2002. At the Reconciliation Fund, she was responsible for dealing mainly with former forced laborers now living in Israel and soon learned that, "the most important aspect of the work is to listen and understand what the applicants went through. I particularly remember one blind applicant who, full of emotion, told me his story—he was unable to read a letter so how could he have filled in an application form?" With her unusual biog-



The staff of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund at its Vienna office: a highly motivated, competent, multilingual team that put heart and soul into their work.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund



raphy and knowledge of foreign languages (she speaks Russian, Hebrew, Romanian, English and German), Berta Zukowitci is representative for the high caliber of the office personnel.

Iva Šarenac, the desk officer for Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, who was born in Croatia, speaks Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, German, English and Russian. She came to Austria in 1991 with her parents, studied law at the University of Vienna and after a year working at the office of the Reconciliation Fund is firmly convinced "that it will be rare to have such satisfying work in a career. Besides the excellent working atmosphere, my job, and especially the telephone contact with the applicants, lets me work little miracles every day and give final recognition to people who too often missed it in their lives. Most applicants are grateful for the symbolic and the material gesture. It is only the heirs who are usually less appreciative. They do not understand why there is an apparently arbitrary deadline in cases where the eligible person has died."

Office Routine Brings a Wealth of Experiences

No explanation, be it ever so eloquent, can make a cut-off date that separates payment from non-payment and that ultimately must appear arbitrary palatable to everyone. But again and again, the desk officers took pleasure in the small miracles they could bring about each day from their desks. And they all confirmed that there was a good working atmosphere at the office of the Reconciliation Fund. The lengthy and careful preparatory meetings that the Secretary General had held with all members of staff before they were hired bore fruit here, as did the sensitive management of the office by Wolfgang Renezeder, a high-ranking diplomat from the Austrian Foreign Service. Renezeder, who holds a law degree from the University of Vienna, had previously been attached to the office of the special representative, Maria Schaumayer, and had therefore already been involved in the negotiations. He served as chief of staff at the Reconciliation Fund from December 2000 to October 2003, before being posted to the Austrian Embassy in Moscow. He was succeeded by his deputy Ulrike Dirisamer from Lambach, who holds a doctorate in Russian studies. After



completing a post-graduate course at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, she worked as an assistant at the office of the special representative. She also drew up the questionnaire for the Reconciliation Fund, was a member of the spot-checking team for Russia and Ukraine and a desk officer for Austria and the entire former Soviet Union. Following her appointment as deputy chief of staff, she retained responsibility for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and checking all direct applications. Like Renezeder, she speaks German, English, French, Russian and Spanish and also has some knowledge of Czech, proving herself to be a worthy successor both in terms of her linguistic abilities and her sensitive team leadership.

Neither in this connection should one forget the exemplary work performed under difficult conditions by the secretarial staff, Doris Rudolf, Ingrid Ehn, and Elisabeth Scheiber, and also by Anita Dumfahrt in the last years. They needed empathy, tact and patience to deal with telephone calls from frail and elderly callers, who could sometimes only express themselves with difficulty and who, given bitter disappointments in the past, sometimes lacked patience. The secretaries never lost theirs, however, and even acquired at least a rudimentary knowledge of various foreign languages in order to be able to forward callers to the relevant desk officer with a full command of the language as quickly as possible. Sometimes, the secretarial office resembled a Tower of Babel with its colorful confusion of tongues. This is how those actively involved described the procedures for dealing with applications: each application that was received was registered by computer and entered into the database input mask together with any accompanying documents. It was then decided whether an application fell under the jurisdiction of the Reconciliation Fund or another institution, or whether there were clear reasons for its rejection. If jurisdictions were clear but not eligibility, the coordinator of the appropriate Austrian province would be asked to investigate the matter. If they were unable to help, an enquiry would be submitted to the International Tracing Service of the Red Cross in Bad Arolsen in the German state of Hesse, although the success rate of such queries was unfortunately not very high. In cases where information was imprecise, a historian was consulted and Hermann Rafetseder, a historian and genealogist from Linz, certainly proved his worth here. With his detailed knowledge of Nazi places of confinement and historic topography and the precision of his research into each individual case, he was able to provide valuable decision-making as-



Workbook of a young forced laborer from Poland: Linz historian Hermann Rafetseder's expertise proved invaluable in assessing and verifying applications in many difficult cases.

Source: Paul Rachler

sistance for correctly categorizing former forced laborers. He checked all the lists submitted by the partner organizations and also participated in most of the spot checks in the Eastern and Central European countries. The broad scope of his activities meant that he was able to answer countless enquiries from official bodies and individuals regarding, for example, the descendents of Shoah victims, special camps or employees. Rafetseder briefly summarizes some of his experiences: "Children were usually required to work from the age of eleven. However, workbooks from the Nazi period show that sometimes children even younger than this had to work."

Both the concentration camps run by the SS and the Gestapo's work training camps (AEL) represented sources of income for these organizations because the laborers were "leased out." Not all work training camps, at which rebellious laborers or those caught while attempting to escape were supposed to be "re-educated" over a number of weeks until they were willing to work, had initially been organized like concentration camps. However, it could be assumed that "Eastern workers," who were categorized as racially "inferior," were treated like concentration camp prisoners. This



gave rise to repeated complaints from companies that "re-educated" laborers had returned as invalids incapable of work. Conditions were also harsh in the so-called re-training camps, where Jews were cynically told that the agricultural work they were being forced to carry out was "preparation for Palestine." Indeed, a small number of them were in fact able to emigrate there in the early years. Persons who were in police detention were also frequently made to work.

"The One with the Gun" Was Sent Away

Rafetseder has collected a large number of photographs from the period and points out something that does not always come to mind immediately. "Most of the photos look nice and harmless, but that is an illusion. These people wanted to stop their families at home from worrying about them...." One desk officer recalls how, "one applicant brought a photograph from the camp with him as evidence, so we asked, 'which one is you?' When he replied 'the one with the gun,' we sent him packing straight away." The historian Rafetseder also shared another experience: "Many women ran away from forced labor in industry. Sometimes, when they were caught again a while later, they were lucky enough to be sent to a farm or a hotel, where everything was a little easier." Sometimes, someone from the other side revealed their better nature and waited a week before reporting that a forced laborer had escaped." On the other hand, the Reconciliation Fund did not recognize as forced labor work in emergency services, which the native population had also been forced to carry out, such as air-raid protection activities. Neither was it possible to recognize forced labor that Soviet citizens had been compelled to perform within the borders of the Soviet Union, something that deprived a large number of Ukrainian women of their claims (theoretically, if one were to average out the overall statistics, the typical forced laborer was a 17-year-old school girl from the region around Kiev). In contrast to this however, former combatants were treated generously where the law permitted. When the Germans disbanded the Yugoslav Army, they had often immediately rounded up the former soldiers and turned them into civilian forced laborers. The Fund recognized them as such; as prisoners of war,



they would have had no claim. Soldiers of the Czechoslovak government in exile who were taken prisoner after participating in the Slovak uprising of 1944 were also treated as forced laborers rather than as prisoners of war with no entitlement to make claims.

Rafetseder also went to the trouble of seeking individual decisions where agricultural and industrial labor had to be differentiated. Some forestry workers had to be categorized as agricultural workers, while others were allocated to industry if they had been deployed in lumber mills or heavy timber transports. The working conditions of peat cutters were generally no better than those of industrial workers. Cooks were clearly better off in an elegant Viennese hotel than in the canteen of an arms factory. The indefatigable historian never missed an opportunity to put applicants in the most favorable position for their petition. But neither did he hesitate to state, "forced labor saved some peoples' lives—for example people who had already been sentenced to death, but who in the final phase of the war were still waiting for the written copy of the judgment from Berlin, which failed to arrive because of Allied air raids..."

Saransaporten and Gorod Sanpöl for St.Pölten

Hermann Rafetseder does not have very positive memories of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), mentioned in an earlier chapter. It was not originally included in the Austrian agreement, but nevertheless became involved because everybody had the right to accept applications to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund. The organization even offered its services in newspaper advertisements. But then applications were left unattended and sometimes geographical names were not only distorted but also actually falsified. There was one Ukrainian woman, for example, whose country of origin was stated as Uganda! Of course, identifying place names was not always an easy task, even when applications had been made directly or through partner organizations.

"We had 30 different variations for Hirtenberg," Rafetseder remembers. There is no one at the Reconciliation Fund who cannot come up with



original examples of distorted names: Saransapolten or Gorod Sanpöl for St. Pölten, Kuschtejn for Kufstein, Wensbrug for Innsbruck, Schtajer for Steyr, Haperschtadt for Lambach, Ajsenschtadt for Eisenstadt, Nejpgofen for Neuhofen an der Ybbs, Waidgof for Waidhofen an der Thaya, Veksajd for Wegscheid, Froljajzen for Frohnleiten or Schtiremjul (or Schtöffnutte) for Steyrermühl, or even Usltverg for Zeltweg, to give just a few examples. Fortunately, the care and experience of the desk officers meant that in each of these cases, the place names were only distorted to recognition and not beyond it! Ambassador Grubmayr's ancient atlas of the Soviet Union, which was mentioned earlier and which is still in his possession, was priceless for tracking down and comparing place names, many of which were changed after the war! The beneficiaries of such conscientiousness appreciated the efforts of the Reconciliation Fund team. In return, Vesna Kantar found that the "the applicants were all very nice, obliging and cooperative." She holds degrees in journalism and communication sciences, has Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and German as her mother tongues, but also speaks French, English and Slovene, and was the Reconciliation Fund's Balkans expert from the start. She is responsible for Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria and takes great pleasure in the many postcards and letters of thanks pinned to the wall above her desk. Some people wrote her poems, others painted postcards for her, one man even sent her a photograph that showed him doing a handstand so that she could see how fit and happy he still felt as a 74 year old! All these touching gestures are an expression of the appreciation felt by those to whom she listened so patiently and then so manifestly helped. "Again and again, they told me what they would do with the money once it arrived," Vesna Kantar says. "Many people used it to buy medicine or for a long-needed operation, but most of them want to save it for a dignified funeral."

The Bottom Fell Out of His World in Vienna

Experiences such as these make it easy to understand why after working for the Reconciliation Fund Thomas Herko made his own personal commitment to "live a life based on respect for human dignity." Herko, the



desk officer for Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, was born in Vienna in 1968 and studied at the universities of Dijon (France), Vienna, Bologna (Johns Hopkins University) and Salzburg. His doctoral thesis on forced labor in Austria and the political process in the years before the establishment of the Reconciliation Fund has been quoted at length in this book. He then worked at Austria's Permanent Mission to the OSCE and the Academic Forum for Foreign Policy of the Austrian League for the United Nations. His most powerful memory in connection with his work at the Reconciliation Fund, where he was able to make good use of his proficiency in English, French and Italian, is of a Jewish Austrian now living in Udine (Italy). Paralyzed on one side after a stroke, the man sat opposite him in his office and told of the humiliating verbal and physical abuse to which he and his father had been subjected when in March 1938 they were forced by the Nazis to clean the streets of Vienna. What shocked him most was that many of those in the crowd had amiably greeted him on the street a few days earlier. The bottom fell out of his world that day.

Elisabeth Brunner-Sobanski had similar experiences during her work at the Reconciliation Fund. After earning a degree in German and theater studies, she taught German language and culture at the St. Petersburg State University and was Austrian Lektor at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Brunner-Sobanski speaks fluent Hungarian and was able to meet virtually all applicants personally because she was responsible for dealing with victims who live in Austria as well as those in Hungary. From time to time, she was also responsible for Greece, Romania and Israel. "Many applicants came to my office to fill in the questionnaire with me, or because they felt a need to talk about the past," Brunner-Sobanski says. "These conversations were often of a very personal nature. Time and again, applicants broke down in tears.

"After decades of silence, some of them were putting the incomprehensible into words for the very first time. For many of them, it was not therefore the amount of compensation that counted, but the recognition of the victims. In the spirit of a 'reconciliation fund,' I always tried to work toward a real reconciliation. One of the things that saddened me most was that for the majority of applicants, April 1945 did not mean the end of their



suffering. Victims experienced the wall of silence created by the process of reconstruction and the economic miracle as yet another blow and humiliation."

Looking back, Georg Magerl, who holds a degree in economics from the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, attended the Helsinki School of Economics within the framework of the EU's Erasmus exchange program and also has a French baccalaureat, views the "opportunity to participate in a financial and especially a moral act of redress as an emotional counterweight to the tragic biographies of my applicants." Magerl, who grew up in Syria, Belgium and former Yugoslavia, is fluent in German, English and French, and has a basic knowledge of Russian and Arabic. He was struck "by how ever-present the memories of that time have now become again in the minds of very elderly applicants who for so many years had suppressed them with so much effort." He also noticed the vast differences in how applicants living in the United States had come to terms with the past. Their reactions ranged from a yearning for Austria to extreme rejection and also included the question of whether Vienna was safe for Jews today.

Paul Rachler holds a history degree from the University of Vienna, a diploma from Johns Hopkins University in Bologna and a master of arts from the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. He gained professional experience as a volunteer academic assistant at the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem and the European Migrants Forum in Brussels, as an election monitor in Croatia, an interviewer for the Shoah Foundation in Vienna and assisting in the administration of the Austrian Bank Settlement at an attorney's office in New York. His responsibilities at the Reconciliation Fund included processing applications from the USA and Australia and, from time to time, also from Israel, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. "Even after dealing with this issue for many years, individual fates still retain the capacity to shock," Rachler concluded. "One never gets used to the horror." As Rachler explained, the award of financial payments is only one aspect of reconciliation work. The other is by far the more difficult one, "namely giving the applicant the feeling that we recognize and understand that he suffered injustice. Being debased and degraded to a sub-human being often left greater psychological wounds than being compelled to work."




Lost for Words at a Reunion with His Parents

"One of the strongest motivations for my work at the Reconciliation Fund is the fact that I can bring in so much of what I learned from my degree course (history and Jewish studies)," says Wolfgang Gasser from Vorarlberg, who in addition to having a history degree is also a qualified bookseller. "Beside the language (Hebrew), it was above all the experience that I had gained while working at an Israeli home for the aged that helped me find a way to talk about what they had suffered when talking with the elderly. One of the most impressive things to me was getting telephone calls from the retirement home near Tel Aviv where I had worked. Some of the men and women I had looked after there were thrilled about the new and unexpected contact..."

For many victims, the possibility to talk to the Reconciliation Fund in their own language was a particularly pleasant surprise. For one of the desk officers, Pinar Düzel, the language was Turkish. Her parents had emigrated from Turkey to Austria in 1974. Although their daughter was born in Austria, she cultivated her parents' language, learned English and French as well and studied international business administration at the University of Vienna before making her expertise available to the Reconciliation Fund.

Gabrielle Fritsch-Kusatz also has a touching tale to tell. She has dual Austrian and Belgian nationality, grew up bilingual with German and French, took the European secondary school leaving exam at the European School in Brussels before studying law in Paris and Brussels, and learned English and Spanish in addition to her other languages. As the desk officer for the USA, and later on for France and Romania, she had a great deal of contact with Austrian émigrés. One of them, as a young man of 20, had intervened and asked for mercy for an old man whom two SS men were forcing to wash the pavement on the Praterbrücke in Vienna with a toothbrush. They laughed at the young man and beat him up—but they did let the old man go. An American told Fritsch-Kusatz how he had been brought to safety in Britain in a children's transport and only got to know his parents, who had emigrated to the USA, after the war. He was at a loss for words when they were reunited: he could only speak English, they only spoke German...



And so each desk officer at the office of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund found that their most powerful memories had shaped their characters in a way that can never be erased. All of them are grateful for this experience. And all the former forced laborers who have now received compensation are grateful to these men and women for the speedy, unbureaucratic and always compassionate way in which they dealt with their petitions. The decision regarding each adequately documented application or petition that had been certified by the historian was made by the Committee of the Reconciliation Fund following a positive recommendation by the office of the secretary general.

The Committee under the chairmanship of the former deputy foreign minister, Ludwig Steiner, usually met once a month, but at least every two months and approved each application one by one according to the name, nationality and date of birth of the applicant, the location at which the forced labor was performed and the category of compensation. Applications that had been collectively forwarded by the partner organizations were also dealt with in his fashion. Negative decisions that had been appealed would have been submitted for a final decision to the Board of Trustees under the chairmanship of the head of government. However, nobody ever made use of this possibility because the generous decision-making practice of the Committee was evidently perfectly clear to all concerned. In Western Union, the Reconciliation Fund found a financial institution with branches in many states that could not only disburse payments correctly, but also provide acceptable acknowledgements of receipt for them. The original idea of demanding a waiver of further claims together with these acknowledgements proved unfeasible. The waiver would have to have been requested first and payment could only have been made once this had been received by the Reconciliation Fund, which would in turn have meant that the waiver was only valid once receipt of the money had been confirmed. Heirs of an eligible person who had died after February 15, 2000, had to submit a non-appealable court order (devolvement of property to heir) or similar official confirmation of acceptance of inheritance. The secure cryptographic system PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) was used for the electronic exchange of data between the German Foundation and the partner organizations. All those involved in handling data at the office of the Reconciliation Fund can confirm the constant efforts made to guarantee the privacy of the individual applicants.



Hearts and Minds Rejoice

By the middle of 2003, more than 100,000 people had received compensation payments from the Reconciliation Fund. In the meantime, the closing date for applications had once again been extended from November 27, 2003, to December 31, 2003. This time, nobody should be able to say that they had been unaware of the possibility of obtaining compensation. Jürgen Strasser had impressive experience of the value of thoroughly prepared publicity measures. The deputy chief of staff (born in 1968) holds a doctorate in Romance languages from the University of Salzburg and degrees from the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna and the Sorbonne, and has held a variety of positions at the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Fluent in French and English and with a knowledge of eight other languages, he was well equipped for both this position and processing applications from France, Switzerland and North Africa. His deep understanding of the French enabled him to communicate the delicate issue of forced labor to the French media very sensitively. The public presentation of the payments to 5,000 French forced laborers by Ambassador Ludwig Steiner at the consulate general in Marseille so minutely planned by Strasser was reported on radio and television throughout the country, in turn leading to a flood of positive responses and new applications.

A Positive Turn of Events on a Deathbed

That was something for the mind to rejoice over. The story that touches hearts, however, is the one that Ewa Natich has to tell. She was born in Warsaw in 1962 and studied education and interpreting (Russian, French) in Moscow, obtaining her doctorate in 1985. After further studies in Washington, she held positions at several organizations, including the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. At the Reconciliation Fund, she by turns processed individual applications from Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia and all former Soviet Republics, as well as all applications from Slovakia and Canada, tasks which for her proficiency in Polish, Russian, French, German and English and basic knowledge of Spanish stood her



in good stead. She particularly remembers a Ukrainian who during his forced labor had a child with a woman from Carinthia, both of whom he was forced to leave behind after the war. Mother and daughter later tried to find him with the help of the International Tracing Service, but their efforts were in vain.

When the daughter heard about the Reconciliation Fund it became her final hope. And the improbable happened. Despite only vague details of the man's name, age and place of birth, the partner organization in Kiev was able to track him down. He received his compensation payment—and a letter from Ewa Natich, who gave him the name and address of "his family in Austria" (she could not give them his address for data privacy reasons). After only a few weeks, the overjoyed daughter called the Reconciliation Fund to say that the letter had reached her father. He had virtually been on his deathbed, but the letter had given him a new lease on life so great was his joy. He had written to the mother and daughter in Carinthia, who had immediately gone to visit him and the family he had had in Ukraine. Many tears of joy were shed. And that was not the only occasion when an office in the heart of Vienna brought long-lost loved ones together again.

Victims who now live in Latin America were the responsibility of María Ángeles Serret Simó from Spain. After graduating from a commercial college in Vienna, she gained practical experience in renowned banks in Vienna and Budapest. She speaks Spanish, Catalan, German, Hungarian, Italian and English and vividly remembers the applicant who had tried to come to terms with her unhappy past artistically—with sculptures, painting and books. Tatiana S., who had emigrated to Argentina after the war, used the money from the Reconciliation Fund to fulfill her dream of publishing an autobiography filled with her own illustrations. Erich N., also from Argentina, sent a copy of his memoirs that he had written for his family, Ilse K. sent a photo documentary. Many of the family photographs that landed on the desks of the desk officers in Vienna still reveal what was close to the hearts of these individuals—and what they missed most. The forced laborers who emigrated to Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia or Chile after 1945 were mostly Jews from Austria or Hungary, but also non-Jews from Russia, Ukraine, former Yugoslavia or Poland. Sometimes, those who had prospered in their new homes donated the payments from the Reconciliation Fund to charity—Antonio P. for example, donated 100



dollars to needy Austrians, helping the poorest of the poor in Argentina through the charity Österreichische Hilfsverein. "I believe that people who have experienced a great deal of suffering themselves develop a special sensitivity toward the sufferings of others," said Maria A. Serret Simó.

With Steiner in 1955 to Steiner in 2004

A very special encounter occurred when a former forced laborer from France, Guy Gault, wrote that he could offer no other documentary evidence to support his application than a letter from the Austrian Chancellor Julius Raab. This letter, written in 1955, showed that Gault had evidently thanked the chancellor for his positive experiences in Austria. Ambassador Steiner was astonished to discover his own signature on this letter. It turned out that he had written the letter himself on Raab's behalf almost fifty years ago. The surprise was great—both in Vienna and the south of France, where Guy Gault lives today. Steiner invited Gault to visit him at the Reconciliation Fund the next time he was in Vienna—as he often was. The big day arrived on July 8. Two old gentlemen flung their arms around each others necks and Guy Gault once again told the story of how he, as an orthopedic specialist, had worked for a colleague in the second district of Vienna. He had learned much there that was of value for his profession and as "Friedrich the Frenchman" had been treated as almost one of the family. At the end of the war, he had witnessed the street fighting around the Danube Canal from his employer's window and in the midst of combat dragged buckets of Danube water to extinguish the fire in a nearby building. "When I returned to France, I realized that only former concentration camp inmates were treated with respect, former forced laborers were regarded as collaborators and the Red Cross, influenced by Communist propaganda, did nothing for them." In 1955, when Austria regained its full sovereignty under the State Treaty, he wrote a letter to the Austrian chancellor thanking him for the difference in the recognition he received and never forgot the request in Steiner's letter (the Chancellor asks you to always keep your kind memories of the Austrian people).



›The Many Faces of Tragedy‹

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Slaves: Violence, Forced Labor and Injustice

The term "slave labor" as used for the first time in 1999 during the negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany referred to forced labor under conditions similar to those in concentration camps and is based on contemporary ideas and not international law. Fundamentally, it is linked to the origins of slavery following the transition from a hunter-gatherer society to a social order based on permanent settlement. Whereas in earlier periods enemies were slaughtered, after settlements became permanent, wars were conducted as a means of procuring labor by force. The prisoners that were taken were the property of the kings; in ancient Egypt they were owned by the pharaohs who sometimes placed them at the disposal of the temples, later they were also owned by private individuals. Slaves were not regarded as human beings, but like animals were counted by the "head," and they and their children, who were also born into slavery, could be sold. Down the centuries, this degrading status was slowly "improved," considerably restricted by the 1926 Slavery Convention of the League of Nations and, at least de jure, abolished by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948. In some respects, the National Socialist regime hearkened back to a period predating even these origins (slave hunting and forced labor), because in ancient times, slave keepers were at least interested in keeping the slaves alive. That was not the case during the Nazi period. Forced labor—which even in the civilian sector was usually hard enough—was the final stage of dehumanization for concentration camp prisoners.

The Ukrainian Nikolai Ivanovic G. remembers a prison and later a penal camp near Linz where besides the Germans, particularly brutal Ukrainian, Polish and Russian SS helpers frequently attacked prisoners with clubs and metal pipes. As well as setting dogs on the prisoners, these guards would execute prisoners and then make the other inmates walk round the corpses of those who had been murdered. Weeping, Nina Ivanovna G. tells of how at the age of fourteen she was taken to a Gestapo prison in Vienna and then to a camp for being a "Bolshevik," a term that at the time meant nothing to her. For one and a half years, she cleaned toilets non-stop. The Czech Council for Victims of National Socialism cites cases where the tortures in smaller penal camps and work training camps were



Prisoners from Dachau concentration camp performing forced labor at an armaments plant: their lives were frequently in greater peril than those of slaves in antiquity.

Source: APA Images/Ullstein Bild

often worse than in large concentration camps, "because here every prisoner was under the constant supervision of an SS man."

Martin V., a Jew who still lives in Vienna, was detailed to work at the city's empty container collection center as part of a 120-man work crew that the Wehrmacht had demanded from the Austrian Jewish Community in fall 1941. They were paid the minimum rates for unskilled laborers for clearing away debris after air raids, digging trenches, building roads and removing corpses. Some 2,000 to 3,000 women, men and adolescents were employed for this purpose, most of them the Jewish partners in mixed marriages and their children, but also single men and women. They all had to wear the yellow star, every man had to adopt the additional name "Israel," every woman the additional name "Sarah"—so that their "inferior" origin was immediately apparent in all documents. "We had to carry sacks, crates and barrels weighing 80 kilograms and also work at night," Martin V. recalls. Wolf Gruner in his book *Zwangsarbeit und Verfolgung—Österreichische Juden im NS-Staat 1938–1945* [Forced Labor and Persecution—Austrian Jews in the Nazi State 1938–1945] describes the situation of these "Jews in compulsory labor service."



"E.W. was arrested by the Gestapo for allegedly inadequate job performance—a short time later his mother was informed of his death. In the case of E.D., a small tin of sardines was found—he was immediately deported to Auschwitz. Martin V. was beaten up with a bicycle pump for no reason..." He has suffered from headaches ever since.

Kasimir Ilich T., who was recruited in Ukraine as a 15 year old, recalls the victimization he suffered in the camps Melk, Wels and Linz. In Wels, when there was no other work to be done, prisoners were made to stack stones. When they had finished, they were told they had not done it nicely enough and had to start all over again. Then groups of twenty prisoners were locked up in a cell so small they were forced to stand upright next to one another and could only leave crawling on all fours. In other camps, they were woken up several times during the night and forced to sing and dance. Nevertheless, when in response to his question of whether she was Austrian the desk officer at the Reconciliation Fund dealing with his case replied that she was, Kasimir T. was giddy and explained that he had been in love with an Austrian woman named Adele S., and she had loved him even more. Nevertheless, he chose to return to his home country alone, on foot with four and a half thousand other fellow sufferers. But now he says, "I should have married her. I regret it to this day..."

Time and Again Women Were Raped

Large numbers of women also had to reckon with being exploited as sexual objects and not merely as laborers. These women frequently came from good families and in many cases were still schoolgirls. Torn away from their social environment, they suddenly found themselves degraded to work slaves in Carinthia or Upper Austria. Almost nothing crops up in the accounts of that period as often as the words, "I was raped more than once"—none of the regulations about the need to preserve "racial" purity changed that. Tatiana N. from the former Soviet Union and now a US citizen was employed in the agricultural sector in the province of Salzburg. She was attacked and sexually abused by an overseer on several occasions. When she fought back, he brutally struck her on the shoulder

with a shovel, leaving a disfiguring scar and a traumatic memory that have not faded to this day.

Between 1939 and 1944, Irmentraud D. was raped by her employer and two SS men, after the war she emigrated to the USA. Anna L. also bears deep mental scars. Now an American, she was born in Klagenfurt in 1944 following the rape of her Polish mother, a forced laborer, by a German soldier. She was rejected by other children and family members as a "disgrace" and spent many years undergoing psychological treatment. Tatiana S., a Russian forced laborer who now lives in Argentina, was raped by a German commandant. Moreover, she also sustained serious injuries to both legs in an air raid, lost all her teeth due to poor nutrition and in 1947 gave birth to a child that was incapable of survival.

In 1940, the Ukrainian woman Eugenie M. was literally rounded up by the SS together with other villagers and deported to Germany in a cattle car. In Bregenz, the group was looked over as if they were cattle at market. A man who owned a tavern and a farm chose Eugenie and made her perform hard physical labor with only inadequate accommodation and too little food. The only person who treated her well was the man's brother. When



Yet another deceptive picture of female forced laborers in the German Reich. Women were repeatedly humiliated, raped and degraded by those who exploited them.

Source: Propaganda book "Europa – arbeitet in Deutschland"/Zentralverlag der NSDAP 1943



three years later she became pregnant with his child, the tavern owner reported them both to the SS, as a result of which his brother was sent to Reichenau concentration camp, and Eugenie M. was sent back to the farm. There she was treated even worse than before, and the farm owner's wife also hit her in the stomach—but Eugenie M. did not lose her baby. She later gave birth to a daughter, and in 1946 she and the child's father married. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that there were also cases of sexual violence by men against men.

"I Have Forgiven, but Do Not Want to Forget"

That rape was a particularly frequent occurrence in the agricultural sector is confirmed by Ewa R. from Poland, who was sent to a camp at the age of sixteen after first having witnessed the murder of her parents and siblings. In Carinthia, she was finally assigned to a farm where she received very little food, sustained several injuries that were left untreated and was also repeatedly raped by the farmer's son. Helena K. (now L.) from Poland also had to endure hard agricultural labor at a farm in Carinthia, where she was also raped by Wehrmacht soldiers quartered there. Zofia F. from Poland twice tried to escape from a southern Austrian farmer because of the inhumane working conditions. On both occasions, she was recaptured, imprisoned for a few weeks and then transferred to a different place of work. The son Zofia F. bore in 1943 was immediately taken away from her and died a short time later, without her ever receiving confirmation of the suspected cause of death—malnourishment. Anna O. from Poland also had to perform hard agricultural work without suitable clothing. A neighbor took pity on her and gave her clothes and shoes, but the heartless farmer burned the gifts. A Wehrmacht soldier hit Anna on the left side of her head with his rifle butt, bursting her eardrum. A bull seriously injured her foot, the wound was left untreated and she still has problems with it today. Finally, she was forcibly sterilized.

The Viennese Jewess Jeanette S., nee H., was taken from her job at the Austrian Jewish Community and assigned to cemetery work. What specifically did that entail? "Clearing out cars full of murdered people and burying



A forced laborer working in agriculture: helping foreign masters bring in the harvest.

Source: Propaganda book "Europa – arbeitet in Deutschland"/Zentralverlag der NSDAP 1943

them in mass graves, burying Jewish corpses, opening graves, removing skeletons, cleaning the soil and dirt off them, stacking them in cardboard boxes, making sure the skulls were particularly clean and putting them in special boxes..." She finished her application with a request to "please spare me from describing my assignment at the railway station with the many thousands of corpses!" Two forced abortions during her assignment were the final inhumanity. All those young women who were forced to have abortions had terrible experiences—without painkillers or anesthetic as Galina P. remembers. One of her pregnancies ended with the induction of a premature birth, and then the child was killed before her very eyes! Feodosia S. from Brest Litovsk was raped several times by

her superiors and Wehrmacht soldiers during her period of forced labor for the Reichsbahn and then forced to undergo an abortion. After the war she never spoke about her suffering and it was only after the death of her husband after many years of marriage and her difficulty in coming to terms with this bereavement that she finally began to tell her family about her experiences as a young woman.

But even these years of horror were unable to extinguish magnanimity and understanding in many victims. "I have forgiven all those involved," concluded the Dutch forced laborer J.A., who suffered misery and hunger, cudgels and beatings, flight and recapture, beatings with a stick and the plundering of his house in the Netherlands. "However, I cannot forget it. My body and my soul remind me every day. And I do not want to forget it. We must do everything we can to prevent such things from being repeated."



Hungarian Jews: Late Victims and Last Chances

Following the occupation of Hungary by the Wehrmacht in 1944, the new rulers promptly began arresting Jews. The Gestapo took one of them, 15-year-old Tibor Drucker, to the ghetto in Szeged where the prisoners had all valuables taken from them, including their watches. Tibor, who was forced to witness how his mother and younger brother were transported to Auschwitz, endeavored to board one such train the next day in order to be reunited with the two. As absurd as it might sound, he was extremely disappointed when the journey in the overcrowded cars in indescribable hygienic conditions did not end at Auschwitz with his family, but at the Strasshof transit camp. After several days, Tibor was assigned to forestry work, which not only involved cutting down trees, but also transporting dead and dying fellow prisoners to mass graves. His mother and brother never returned from Auschwitz. Mixing up the trains had saved his life, and Austria's decision to recognize this group of victims as slave laborers gave him at least a modest symbolic compensation. Today, Tibor Drucker lives in Canada, where he is the director of a small printing company. For many years, no official body was even interested in the tragic fate of the Hungarian Jews in the last year of the war. Unless they had been sent to a concentration camp, the German Foundation could declare that it was not responsible for handling their cases. The special representative of the Austrian government, Maria Schaumayer, was determined to include this unfortunate group of people in her negotiating solution from the very outset. Hungarian officials would have preferred not to have been reminded about their fate at all. Initial estimates provided to Austria by the Hungarians put their number at "perhaps a few hundred." Thanks to Schaumayer's efforts, both the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Austria now took care of them. Eventually thousands of these victims were tracked down, many in Israel. While for many years there was a lack of detailed historical studies, and victims were reluctant to fill in new questionnaires all the time, countless telephone conversations with the desk officers from the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, many conducted in Hebrew, resulted in an increasing level of trust. Initially, the victims all wanted to involve lawyers because they no longer had any faith in official procedures—eventually though, communication functioned perfectly without lawyers.



Josef G., who now lives in Israel, was taken from his Hungarian birthplace, Földes, together with his mother and five siblings. After suffering at various locations in Hungary and in the Strasshof transit camp, he was assigned to forced labor in Austria, first of all in agriculture and then in a bomb factory. The family's suffering reached its peak at the concentration camp: "We ate fodder beet, were given injections and watched how human skeletons were loaded onto trucks and then thrown into ditches. We were full of vermin and suffered from hunger and cold. Then we were taken by train to Theresienstadt. On the way there, our train was attacked by airplanes and there were large numbers of dead and wounded, two of my brothers were also injured. After being liberated by the Russian army, we fell ill with typhus. One of my sisters was taken away from us and never came back; another sister and a brother still suffer from serious mental disorders today. I was also unable to find my way back to a normal life. I suffer from permanent weakness, anxiety and have big problems in confined spaces..."

A psychiatrist described the lasting impact this suffering had on one of his patients (Dov G.) in a detailed medical report. "The Hungarian man who was born in 1929 was healthy in every respect before the Nazi persecution. Between the ages of ten and fifteen, he was persecuted and kept in several camps. Deep mental wounds were also inflicted upon him at this time. He developed a highly schizoid personality, only rarely speaks to other people, suffers from outbursts of anger at work and at home, trusts nobody, including his wife and children; he is not even interested in them... He suffers from a post-traumatic stress disorder accompanied by persistent tension, serious headaches, a low tolerance threshold, is sensitive to noise, suffers from serious sleep disorders, poor concentration and a poor memory." Such mental wrecks bear witness to the barbaric inhumanities that even today constantly haunt those who experienced them.

Nazi slave labor in the twentieth century in the heart of a highly civilized continent, symbolically "compensated for" half a century later with 7,630 euros: "Given such experiences, who could advocate forgetting to put this guilt and shame behind us?" wrote the Salzburg law professor and publicist René Marcic after the war. "We may not remain silent about the past. Not for the sake of revenge; on the contrary for the sake of restoring the lost standards."

Traumatic Experience for Industrial Workers as Well

A second category covered the deployment of former forced laborers in industry and business enterprises. In many cases, extremely heavy labor in the agricultural sector was recognized in the higher category of industrial labor for which a voluntary payment of 2,543 euros was paid. One of those who received this payment was Jacobus C. van D. from The Hague in the Netherlands. In his own country, he was an auxiliary postman, but in Linz he spent two years repairing telephone lines on roofs and bridges for the Post and Telegraph Construction Office. "The work was very difficult and dirty and often had to be done at great heights. Nobody ever asked whether we had the nerve for it or if we would be able to manage; an order was an order, there was no possibility to resist." His conclusion: "Even after all these years, this period of my life remains a dark chapter and a traumatic experience."



Forced labor was frequently performed under conditions that resulted in permanent damage to health.

Source: Propaganda book "Europa - arbeitet in Deutschland"/Zentralverlag der NSDAP 1943

Stefan K., who is now a Canadian citizen, was deported with other men and women from his village in Ukraine to what is now Austria and sent to work in the forestry sector. "In summer, we had to sleep in the forest, in the winter we all slept together in a wooden hut," he recalls. "I still suffer from acute asthma, a scarred lung, severe cramps in my legs, varicose veins and sleeplessness." Yuri Anatolyevich K. was 14 when he was taken from St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) to a distribution camp in Dresden. "The invalids were sent to the crematorium, I was sent to Linz." Here he was assigned to carry out repair and maintenance work in the agricultural sector and housed in a camp. "We had one overseer who was called Anna who treated us well,



there was another called Martha who whipped us..." Klavdia Ivanovna V. from Russia has suppressed all memory of her forced labor in Austria, does not want to even think about it, but still says, "thank you for thinking about us!"

Sarkis K. from Athens is willing to tell a little bit more about the time that he and his family spent working in an industrial town in Styria. In his case, it was the form of recruitment that was remarkable. "The German troops encircled our district and burned down our houses." Then they talked about the good working conditions in Germany, and his father, mother, two boys and a girl set off. Once they arrived at their destination, they were housed with Russian, French and other prisoners in a fenced-off area. Sometimes on free evenings they were allowed to go into town together. On one such occasion they were stopped and put up against the wall as supposed escapees, until at the last moment they could make a convincing case that they were out legally. But he too says, "It is clear that our story is a very long one, and there are many details that I do not want to describe..." Following the invasion of the Red Army, the family was subjected to new forms of harassment before starting an adventurous journey home to Athens via Veszprém.

The Barbarism of the "Mühlviertler Rabbit Hunt"

Anna K., a Polish woman who now lives in Klagenfurt, was categorized as an industrial worker for very special reasons. As an eleven-year-old child, she ended up at the farm of a man in the Mühlviertel district who was executed by the Soviet Army after the end of the war for having been a particularly fanatical Nazi. During the notorious "Mühlviertler Rabbit Hunt," he had personally handed over concentration camp prisoners who had hidden on his farm to the SS. On her journey to Austria, she was separated from her mother whom she never saw again. She learned from others that her mother had worked for the same farmer and that he had supposedly sent her to Mauthausen concentration camp. Anna K. recalls the humiliating treatment meted out to foreign workers at the farmer's table and that the Ukrainian "overseer" Alexander B. used to hit the table



with a horsewhip. He also threatened the little Anna that he would "impale her on a pitchfork" if she did not carry out orders correctly. "When we win the war, you will all be hanged," he once threatened the foreign laborers. When in February 1945 Soviet prisoners broke out of Mauthausen, 20 of them hid on the large farm. The farmer handed them all over to the armed SS who had carried out a veritable "rabbit hunt." He even brought the last ones up from the cider cellar himself at gunpoint because none of the soldiers wanted to go down there themselves. When the Red Army reached Mühlviertel, Soviet soldiers tracked the farmer down, threw him in the silo pit and shot him after he had begged for mercy and kissed their boots. For days, the Soviets forbade the burial of his body, which was left lying on a dung heap. After about a week, the corpse was washed with the help of an old Polish evacuee (none of the locals wanted to have anything to do with it) and buried by the priest. Anna K. had long since run away from the farm and reached the nearby American front line. "For the first time in ages, I was treated like a human being again... I never visited the farm and that unhappy area again," she wrote decades later to the special government representative Maria Schaumayer. "I lost my mother, my education, health and home forever. No official body ever offered any word of regret or apology for the huge injustice I suffered, let alone any compensation." This has now been done belatedly in the form of a symbolic gesture. The use of foreign forced laborers in Upper Austria has been studied in particular detail. In *Industrie und Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus* [Industry and Forced Labor in National Socialism] edited by Gabriella Hauch, (2000), several authors examined the issue of forced labor. The study paid particular attention to the Hermann-Göring Works, the nitrogen factory and shipyard in Linz, the Steyr Works, the aluminum plant in Ranshofen and the Lenzing spun rayon factory. Oliver Rathkolb refers to a cache of documents with the personal details of 40,000 workers at Reichswerke Hermann Göring in Linz (there was a second plant at Salzgitter in Germany), including those of some 22,000 foreign workers. Josef Moser shows that at the end of 1944, foreign laborers accounted for 63 percent of the workforce at the Linz steel mill and 66 percent at the Oberdonau Ironworks. In the fall of 1944, there were almost exactly 567,000 foreign forced laborers (25 percent of all those in employment) working throughout the "Ostmark" (approximately the territory of what is now Austria). In Oberdonau, which was somewhat larger than the present-day province of Upper Austria, the percentage of foreign workers amounted to 29 percent.



Kaprun—Memorial at Icy Heights

Some 6,300 Civilian Forced Laborers and 4,000 Prisoners of War Deployed

The construction of the Kaprun storage power station in the Hohe Tauern in Salzburg is a classic example of extremely heavy labor carried out at icy heights. Originally planned in the 1920s, the groundbreaking ceremony was held in 1938 soon after Austria's annexation by Nazi Germany. According to a study by Austrian contemporary historians Oliver Rathkolb and Florian Freund, by the end of the war more than 6,300 civilian forced laborers and up to 4,000 prisoners of war were employed on this monster project that claimed countless lives. Or to put it more precisely, 160 lives were lost after the end of the war, until 1945 no one had counted. Even people who were actually there at the time have only a rough idea of how many died while forced laborers from Eastern Europe, undernourished and inadequately clothed, toiled away at the edge of the glacier in murderous cold living off cabbage soup. "Hundreds" they say, "at least four hundred."

In November 1944, the first set of machines was put into operation. After the end of Nazi rule and World War II, construction was continued, partly with financing from the US European Reconstruction Program, and completed in 1955. The entire undertaking became a symbol of patriotic reconstruction in

post-war Austria as the Kaprun Legend. The "triumph of technology over nature" (three giant 120-meter-high concrete dams) transformed a sleepy village of mountain guides into a showcase of modern tourism. Ironically, many former Nazis who were unable to find other work were employed on the project after the war.

Nevertheless for many years the suffering of the foreign forced laborers was barely mentioned—not even by those who knew better. When Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev visited the Kaprun power plant at his own request on July 5, 1960, he praised the "outstanding achievement of Austrian engineering and technology"—he did not say a single word about the sacrifice of his compatriots who had been exploited there. After all, they had been "traitors to the Fatherland." In Austria, this disgraceful chapter was reopened after the public debate flared up again in the 1980s. On September 4, 2003, at a ceremony attended by high-ranking political representatives and with the support of Verbund, the company that now operates the power plant, a plaque was unveiled commemorating the forced exploitation of foreign laborers during the Nazi period. The drama *Das Werk* by Austrian

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Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek also deals with the tribulations of the past. This play has been performed at Akademietheater in Vienna, directed by Nico-

las Stemann, and at the Salzburg Festival and was awarded a prize as the best new German-language drama at Mühlheimer Theatertagen 2004.



Employees of the Reconciliation Fund at the memorial for forced laborers in Kaprun. The play *Das Werk* by Austrian Nobel prize winner Elfriede Jelinek also commemorated the victims.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

Agricultural Work Was Not Necessarily Easier

In addition to slave labor and industrial labor, the third category of forced labor on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria covered by the Reconciliation Fund Law was normal work, in other words work that could be generally expected in the agricultural and forestry sectors. A one-time symbolic compensation payment of 1,453 euros was made here. The reason for the smaller amount was explained in chapter 8. The assumption was that people working in agriculture were subject to less heavy labor and were less exposed to danger than those working in industry. In many



cases, this assumption was justified. It was traditional practice on farms to treat maids and farm laborers as "servants" but to allow them to eat together, and frequently to share the table with the farmer's family. In many cases, farming families did not distinguish between Austrian and foreign laborers.

In the study of forced labor in the agricultural sector referred to several times earlier, Stefan Karner and Peter Ruggenthaler assumed that a total of 580,000 civilian forced laborers were employed in all sectors of the economy on the territory of present-day Austria during the war years (page 550). Thirty to forty percent of them were employed in the agricultural sector, where "forced laborers were integrated to a relatively high degree in the life of the farm and the family." (page 553) In his book *Ein Geschenk für den Führer* [A Gift for the Führer], Peter Ruggenthaler writes that the advantages of forced labor in the agricultural sector outweighed those of industry (better food and accommodation, greater safety, only rarely collective hatred). However, there were frequent deviations from the norm as the percentage of National Socialists was higher among the rural population than in many towns (page 48). The desk officers of the Reconciliation Fund soon discovered that in an unexpectedly large number of cases, it was false to assume that life had been better in the agricultural sector. A horrifyingly large number of people had memories of inhumane conditions in the countryside. The countless rapes that generally resulted in women being placed in the higher category of slave laborers have already been dealt with in another chapter of this book.

Herded to Work by German Shepherd Dogs

Anastasia K., a Ukrainian now living in the USA, was 21 when the war ended. For three years, she was forced to carry out heavy agricultural work for up to 18 hours a day with no day off, and was also beaten by the farmer's wife on more than one occasion. A baby boy, the product of her rape by the farmer's son, was taken away from her immediately after birth, one hour later she learned of its "sudden death." She had to spend the night with the tiny corpse that had been returned to her. Anastasia K.

still suffers from sleeping disorders, anxiety and depression today. Generally speaking, female agricultural workers were more likely to become pregnant than factory workers because the comparatively greater degree of freedom they enjoyed offered more opportunities for intimate relationships than the strict rules governing camp life.

The Ukrainian Katerina Yakivna G. was reported to the Gestapo by her farmer because he caught her reading Russian newspapers. The police took her straight to prison from the fields. When she contacted the Reconciliation Fund, Maria K., who was born in Austria but now lives in England, had no documents with which she could prove the fate of her mother, who had been assigned to work in the agricultural sector. All she had was a card congratulating her mother on the birth of her daughter from an aunt that was addressed to a farm in St. Georgen ob Judenburg. The municipal authorities there were able to confirm August 19, 1941, as Maria's date of birth and thus also her mother's period of forced labor. Marija V. S. from Ukraine worked in Carinthia. She had to get up at five o'clock in the morning and was herded to work together with other laborers by German Shepherd dogs. She had to lift heavy cauldrons onto the stove, as a result of which she injured herself so seriously that she was subsequently unable



Deployment in the agricultural sector: some laborers were treated as part of the family sharing meals, others were driven to work with brutality.

Source: Propaganda book "Europa – arbeitet in Deutschland"/Zentralverlag der NSDAP 1943



to have children. Today she has a strong need to tell her story and cries a great deal when she does so. Raisa Petrovna B., who was born in 1939 in the same area of Ukraine, can barely remember anything, as she was still very young when her mother was sent to perform forced labor. But she knows that her mother and the children were able to eat whey at the farmer's table, where there was "lard and sweet coffee," and that after liberation she impressed it upon her children that they should "forget everything!" What had happened "there" still damages the entire family today. In a total of 973 cases, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund granted additional payments to mothers that were paid out through the six partner organizations. Most of these payments were made to women from Ukraine (526) and Poland (352) and were almost always for proven births. Only a small number of payments were made for abortions.

It should not be forgotten that the "hidden" number of abortions is particularly high. Nevertheless, in a significant number of cases it was possible to track down surviving mothers and children, and in accordance with the law both received the payment to which they were entitled. As mentioned earlier, many mothers falsified birth certificates because they correctly assumed that a birthplace in the former German Reich with a corresponding date of birth could prove a lifelong disadvantage for the child. On the other hand, in many cases, births on Austrian territory could be proven by normal birth certificates. Ambassador Grubmayr was able to inspect many documents while carrying out his spot checks. The Ukrainian foundation had instructed many mothers to have their children's dates of birth changed in official documents in the late 1990s; Grubmayr also saw a large number of such court rulings.

Harassment in Hotels and Households

For the purposes of the symbolic payments, forced laborers who had worked in taverns, restaurants, hotels and private households were placed in the same category as agricultural workers. But their work was no bed of roses either. A book by Annkatrin Mendel, *Zwangsarbeit im Kinderzimmer* [Forced Labor in the Nursery] describes the lot of housemaids,



cooks, nursemaids and housekeepers from the former Soviet Union. The Gauleiter of Oberdonau, August Eigruber, employed a Polish maid in his villa at Auf der Gugl in Linz, 19-year-old Stefania J. from a village west of Warsaw. Vera J. from the former Soviet Union worked at a hotel kitchen in Salzburg, where she also had to clean shoes. She was housed in a camp that she was not allowed to leave unless she was working and received little in the way of nourishment. She bore a son who was taken away from her soon after he was born. After the war, she searched for him with the help of the International Red Cross and after 50 years found him. "He is not in good health, but I don't have the money and the strength to bring him to Australia to be with me, and I have serious health problems myself."

Some people had better luck in those unhappy times. In March 1943, Andreas G. was taken in a convoy of forced laborers from Lyon to Lavamünd in Carinthia, where he was sent to work on the construction of a power plant on the Drau. However, only one month later the employment office assigned him to carry out "urgent work" at a hotel near Wolfsberg, where he became a popular cook. At the end of the war, the British occupying forces employed him in the same capacity. The confirmation of employment that he took home to France was correspondingly positive: "His cooking was tasty and economical, he was discreet and hardworking..." Instead of improving, the situation of Jiri Z. from the Czech Republic deteriorated badly over time. Initially he had to work at two hotels, but was arrested and sent to the nearby Reichenau work training camp when he went to the Gestapo to pick up his workbook. At Reichenau, he lived in a wooden hut with 14 other prisoners with whom he shared a sleeping pallet. Wooden latrines, a washroom with only cold water and daily marches to clear bomb debris in Innsbruck resulted in severe health problems.

How Alfred Maleta Became a Chief Witness

Alfred Maleta, who was later to become the President of the Austrian Nationalrat, was imprisoned for more than two years in the concentration camp Dachau before being put to work as a Wehrmacht driver after his release. In his memoirs *Bewältigte Vergangenheit* [A Past Confronted], page



Alfred Maleta, who after the war became President of the Nationalrat, was first of all imprisoned in a concentration camp and later witnessed forced recruitment drives in Ukraine while serving as a Wehrmacht driver.

Source: Hopi-Media/BKA/BPD

236, Maleta describes the ruthless manner in which women were recruited from Poland and other East European countries. "One day I was out in our van, accompanied by a corporal who in civilian life was a butcher from the Rhineland, when we arrived at a large square fenced in with barbed wire. Penned in there, we could not believe our eyes and our ears, were women, nothing but women. They screamed, they clamored; new trucks came and spewed out more women. Now we understood. These women were destined for the transports to Germany; the home front needed workers, foreign laborers for the factories. The SS had found a very simple solution. They encircled the weekly market in Kremenschuk, drove all the women together and dragged

them to the trucks despite their desperate struggles. Most of them were young women, and probably also included mothers whose small children were left at home to cry for them..." On that occasion at least, he was able to save three women from a cruel fate by impulsively pushing them into his van. In the light of such accounts, it is hard to understand why even in some West European countries former forced laborers were accused of having been volunteers and collaborators if they did not resist or elude deportation. Were the representatives in the French National Assembly unaware of how the "voluntary" reporting for forced labor had come about when after the war they reserved the term "deported" exclusively for concentration camp victims? Did they not know that women and men who really had left their homeland more or less voluntarily found their expectations deeply disappointed when they arrived in the Reich and were subsequently subjected to nothing but humiliation? And that even those who were more fortunate and who sometimes even remember their work in



Austria with some pleasure suffered homesickness and longing when they were not permitted to go home. Ljubov Fedorivna V. from Ukraine probably did not find Austrian traditions and customs adequate consolation for the loss of her home, dignity and self-esteem. But in a ten-page letter to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, the former bar maid at an Austrian tavern was still able to recall the words of a song that went "Geh, mach dei Fensterl auf, i wart scho so lang drauf..." She had even learned the proverb "Don't put off until tomorrow what can be done today."

It would also be wrong to forget those individuals who were able to help their fellow victims from their positions close to high-ranking Nazis. An Austrian Jewess who now lives in Israel, for example, was assigned to work for SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, when he established the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna in 1938, which was soon chosen as a model for similar institutions in Berlin and Prague. Eichmann used her to channel legal travel documents to wealthy Jews, putting the money he received into his own pocket. However, the young woman took the opportunity to copy them and slipped them to poor Jewish friends who in this manner were also able to emigrate. When suspicion fell upon her, she was able to flee in time and later received an Israeli order in recognition of her efforts.

Applause for Forced Labor with a Toothbrush

Embedded in the sidewalk in front of the Akademisches Gymnasium secondary school on Vienna's Beethovenplatz are three granite slabs, the origins of which are explained by an inscription on the wall: "The three granite slabs originate from the 'Great Road' of the National Socialist Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg. They were made by forced laborers and prisoners in concentration camps and are a speaking testimony." Below this stands the date and occasion for this simple, powerful memorial: January 28, 2001, almost sixty-three years "after Jewish pupils and teachers were expelled from the Akademisches Gymnasium." In the spirit of National Socialist ideology, expulsion from schools and universities, public positions and institutions was the logical first step toward the com-

plete expulsion and soon the physical extermination of Jewish citizens. The "collapse of the culture of living together" (Peter Huemer) had started as soon as the German Wehrmacht occupied Austria.

"March 13, 1938, was the day before my sixteenth birthday, and my world collapsed around me," wrote Hermine Nurith B.-E. from Israel, formerly from Vienna. "From then onward, there was only ridicule, humiliation and the violent revocation of fundamental human rights." Like others who shared her fate, she was stopped on the street several times—at Augarten Park, on Praterstrasse and on Ringstrasse near Schwarzenbergplatz—given a bucket of water and a strong detergent and forced to scrub off Schuschnigg government slogans for an independent Austria with a brush. Twice the bucket was "accidentally" kicked over by the uniformed mocking onlookers, and the hydrochloric acid ruined her hands and clothes. The family owned a shop at Hegelgasse 13 that sold books, stationary and toys, and Hermine often used to help out there in the afternoon. One day, two uniformed men came enquiring after her absent father, hung a placard around her neck warning "Aryans" not to buy "in this Jewish shop" and stood her outside in front of the door. Soon afterwards a Nazi was appointed provisional manager of the shop and her father ejected. Nine-year-old



Jewish businessmen from Vienna's 3rd district "cleaning the streets." The worst aspect of the humiliation was the stares, mockery and jeering of the onlookers.

Source: DÖW



Louis T. had similar experiences when he, his parents and his sister were forced to kneel and wash Krukenkreuze (the symbol of the regime that Nazi Germany had forcibly removed from power) from the street. "There were lots of other Jews there as well and we were surrounded by a crowd of onlookers who jeered and cursed, mocked and spat at us. And then of course, there were those Viennese who were particularly active and drove us on by kicking and throwing stones. It was great fun for the onlookers. The family was forced to perform this humiliating work at the corner of Sechsschimmelgasse and Altmüttergasse, and then up to Sobieskigasse, Galileigasse and Nussdorferstrasse. "Even today I start to tremble when I see someone in a military uniform ... After the so-called Night of Broken Glass, my father was arrested." A fellow sufferer, Leon N., even had to wear a placard around his neck saying "I am a filthy Jew" while he washed Praterstrasse with a bucket of water and a sponge. A few days later, he was taken from Praterstern for "gymnastic exercises" in Prater where he had to roll around on the ground among dog dirt, pull himself across the ground on his elbows and stretch out his hands while truncheon blows rained down. Because he instinctively drew back his hands, he was punched and beaten with rubber truncheons, bursting his eardrum and breaking his nose and three teeth...

"My Whole Body Trembled"

Lotte B., a pupil at the grammar school on Novaragasse in Vienna, had to wash away Schuschnigg slogans on Rotenturmstrasse with a brush, driven on by slaps in the face and punches. "I ran home crying and with bleeding hands, my whole body trembling. After a few days, the whole process started again..." Inge B.-A., a sixth-grade pupil at the Chajes Grammar School was stopped one day near what is now Friedensbrücke by Hitler Youth and SA men who abused her as a "Jewish pig" and took her to wash streets "on a large square that I did not know." Everyone was forced to sing Jewish songs—with a loud voice and lowered head. "Finally back at school, I broke down crying hysterically." In this connection, it should also be remembered that in many cases these "scouring crews" were not just a feature of the first few days after the regime change in Austria. Later on,



proper cleaning crews were organized that had to carry out road cleaning and all other forms of clearance work for longer periods.

Elisabeth B. has written a detailed account of her experiences as an Austrian Jewess after 1938 (Elizabeth's Story). Among other things, she describes how one day a bucket of water was pressed into her hand and she was sent to clean army barracks: "Lye and acid mixed with water left little skin on my hands. My mother smeared them with Vaseline, which brought some small relief, but the pain was still infernal. Both sides of the road leading to the barracks were lined with people to do as much to us as possible ... They spat in our faces, pushed and kicked us, adding verbal insults to the physical abuse ... However, the real damage was done to me when I caught sight of a so-called friend in the crowd. That hurt more than anything else." She had to watch as SA men smeared Jewish doors, windows and shop fronts with their slogans ("Jewish pigs." "Get ready for the night of the long knives!" etc.) How did the Nazi persecutors recognize Jews on the street? "Religious Jews were betrayed by their beards, side locks, big hats and long dark coats. Often neighbors betrayed Jews with whom they had lived side by side for years. But anybody who did not wear a swastika was immediately conspicuous. Later it became obligatory to wear a yellow armband with the Star of David..."

"I am the only survivor from our large family. My father Moriz Mayer was arrested shortly after the annexation of Austria and sent to Dachau and Buchenwald," wrote Hans Mayer from Stockholm. Although he was only ten years old at the time, he still clearly remembers Jews being made to clean the streets. His mother, the former opera singer Grethe Goldegg, was able to send him to safety in Sweden in time. "My parents originally had tickets to America for all three of us. But the two of them were deported to Chelmo (Kolmhof) and killed there." His father had created his own monument by "giving the Viennese over 2,000 jaunty Viennese folk songs," the son says.

Approximately one quarter of all applications from Austria were made by Jews from families with one Jewish and one non-Jewish parent (half-Jews). The Jewish partner and children from such mixed marriages were generally protected from deportation through the relationship with the non-Jewish partner, but the situation of such families was extremely in-



secure, the mental and emotional strain immense. The constant threat of arrest and deportation hung over them, young people often had to abandon their education or vocational training, victimization, verbal abuse and sexual harassment were everyday occurrences at the workplace. From 1940 onward, an increasing number of these individuals had to perform unpaid hard labor at armaments factories.

A Chance of Survival by Going Underground

The idea of flight and emigration occurred late, too late, to many Jews. From November 1941 onward when the borders of the German Reich were closed for Jewish émigrés, most were left at the mercy of the National Socialist dictatorship. Some 128,000 Jewish citizens of former Austria had left their home country by then. Only those who were especially fortunate were now able to find a hiding place that offered passable safety and protection with "Aryan" friends or relatives. Some Roma and Sinti also eked out an existence "underground" with farmers, hiding outdoors where they frequently caught frostbite and rheumatism. Estimates vary greatly on how many people were able to survive the Nazi period on the territory of present-day Austria in hiding. It is also impossible to arrive at a precise definition of "going underground." It is certain that there were several hundred people in hiding, toward the end of the war there were surely many more.

Monika H. was one of them. She counted as a Mischling (person of mixed race), and her relationship with an Aryan boyfriend was repeatedly denounced as Rassenschande by a hostile Viennese woman. The boyfriend was court-martialed and only saved from the worst by the intervention of a good-willed superior. Monika H., however, was summoned to the Gestapo on a number of occasions and was finally able to find refuge at a friend's home in Alt Aussee (the aunt of the author Barbara Frischmuth who after 1945 received an award from the state of Israel). For four years, she survived without ration cards thanks to the generosity of people who were willing to help—"a terrible and always hounded existence," as she noted retrospectively.



At the age of 96, Leo M. described how hard it was to find shelter with the following words. When Hungarian and Romanian Jews clearing debris on Gumpendorfer Strasse in Vienna were surprised by an air raid, they were refused entry to the air raid shelter on Esterhazygasse: "Are you still alive you Jewish pig?" A family who otherwise offered him much kindness was nevertheless too frightened to allow him to stay overnight: "You know..., with the Jewish star." Eventually in early 1944, two friends allowed him to hide with them until the end of the war. "I ate what people put out on the sidewalk." When his suffering was over, he wanted to find the SS man who had shouted at him, "You should drop dead, you Jewish pig!" after he had injured himself performing forced labor. Nobody was willing to give him the address. "I tried going to the Jewish Community." In vain. "You are not circumcised." Then he tried his luck with the "kaedisch religion," the "holy religion" in this case presumably the Catholic Church. Nothing again: "You wore the Jewish star, you belong to the Jews." After he met a woman and married her, the couple emigrated to Australia: "I was frightened the Nazis would return," he says.

The Committee of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund unanimously adopted a resolution stipulating that individuals who had spent the war in hiding should also receive a symbolic compensation payment, because many of them had had to perform household tasks and contribute to their living costs in exchange for being hidden. They were generally categorized as industrial workers because in many cases they had to suffer the hardship of seeking food and shelter in forests.

Roma and Sinti—Persecuted "Gypsies"

The fate of the gypsies is in many respects similar to that of the Jews—mercilessly persecuted, despised, marginalized not only in the Nazi period, but also for centuries before that. Their ancestors were carried off to the West from their original home in Punjab (India-Pakistan) by Arabs in the 9th and 10th centuries, and by Muslims in the 11th century. Many of them ended up on the Balkans as slaves and soldiers. Today, the politically correct term for this group is Roma and Sinti, a cause of new problems



"Gypsies" were regarded a priori as "asocial," in some places they were coerced into work and later (or sometimes straight away) deported to extermination camps.

Source: DÖW

because someone is either a Rom, a Romni, or a Sinto, a Sintiza (the word is probably derived from the Indian province Sind and the Sindhu river). On the other hand, "Roma" now serves as the internationally recognized generic term; the Romani Union has been registered at UN headquarters in New York as an umbrella organization with consultative status since 1979. The differences between Roma and Sinti are not that great and are manifested in family practices and in a slightly varying use of the Romanes language, which derives its origins from the classic Indian literary language Sanskrit.

Roma and Sinti object to the German term Zigeuner because it has frequently been interpreted as meaning Ziehgauner (traveling thieves), the term applied to traveling tradesmen, knife grinders and tinkers. The word Zigeuner (gypsy) served as an ambiguous classification of the "traveling professions" and also included traveling non-gypsies, and in theory excluded non-traveling gypsies. Usually the authorities simply decided who was to be considered a gypsy. Every negative classification is just as unfair as a one-sided romanticization as masters of weeping violins. Member of this ethnic group want to be treated as Rom, in other words a "man" too. In earlier centuries, Sinti (it was mostly they who advanced into the Ger-



man heartland of Europe), like the Jews, were repeatedly branded and expelled from the country, or at least systematically monitored, as the cause of the plague and cholera, but also as Turkish spies and sorcerers. The Roma, who lived mostly in Central Eastern Europe and on the Balkans, were no better off. The Nuremberg Laws contained no reference to Roma and Sinti, but they were nevertheless placed on the same level as the Jews. Hitler did not mention them in *Mein Kampf*, presumably because of their small numbers (an estimated 26,000 in the entire Reich). However, their "asocial nature" ensured that local authorities automatically regarded them as candidates for persecution and soon for extermination. The Nazi directives of April 4, 1938, defined as "asocial" everyone "who by anti-social, if not criminal behavior shows that he does not wish to be integrated into society." "Gypsies" in Austria were hit by a first wave of arrests as early as April 1938, in 1939 official measures against them were extended to include police "preventative detention" and SS "protective custody" (concentration camp).

Mongo Stojka recalled the sufferings of his people in his book *Papierene Kinder* and in the ORF television program *Erfüllte Zeit* broadcast on August 15, 2004. In 1941, his family's caravans were parked on the Hellerwiese in Vienna-Favoriten, after having picked up "gypsy families," but above all children, in the villages of Burgenland. The nearby Church of Divine Peace provided the families with one more opportunity to bombard their beloved patron Sunto Maria with pleas and wishes. The Nazi authorities thwarted an answer to their prayers. The next morning, all that remained on the meadow were the empty caravans, their occupants were already on their way to concentration camps. This was the start of the large-scale deportations of Roma to the Third Reich's extermination camps. The ghetto in Lodz, the nearby extermination camp Kulmhof and the concentration camps Dachau, Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, Mauthausen-Gusen and finally, on a massive scale, Auschwitz, were the final destinations for thousands of Burgenland Roma, Sinti, Lovara and Kalderash. Some 85 percent of Austrian "gypsies" did not survive Nazi persecution.

Austrian legislation remembered this group of victims relatively late in the day. In 1947, they were granted a theoretical right to compensation, but it was not until the 1970s that their status was brought into line with that of other victims, and they were not recognized as an ethnic group in



their own right until 1993. The Austrian Reconciliation Fund placed most members of the community in the highest category of victims if—as most of them had been—they had been detained in camps similar to concentration camps. Austria and those parts of Romania bordering Hungary were the main places of origin of those Roma and the Lovara (the majority of whom are settled in these areas) who applied for compensation.

At Night in Barns or the Forest

Johanna H. from Austria was arrested by the SS at three o'clock in the morning on September 21, 1941, together with her two children and taken to the transit camp ("Gypsy Camp") Lackenbach. "As a forced laborer, I suffered three and a half years of ill treatment, disease and beatings. After the demolition of the Jewish temple in Lackenbach, we had to carry heavy stones up to the camp administration. We women also had to fell trees, carry out heavy labor building roads and digging a pond as well as load large stones onto a truck for the construction of the railway station. We were often exhausted to the point of insensibility. I fell ill with typhus, could no longer eat and my eyesight and hearing deteriorated considerably. I still suffer from the after-effects today." Her two small children died of typhus in the camp, as did her father and her grandfather who were all oppressed at the "Gypsy Camp" Lackenbach. Only her mother, who had to carry out hard physical labor working on farm fields and building roads, and her husband Johann H., survived the three and a half years at Lackenbach. Johann H. did not live to receive the compensation awarded to him for his imprisonment in 1962. Another Austrian, Stefan G., who was deported to Lackenbach as a thirteen year old in 1942, had to carry out unpaid forced labor under police guard until the end of the war.

Johanna F. was also from Austria. "As far as I can remember (note: she was born in 1937), my entire family was always on the run from the Nazis. My mother was murdered at Ravensbrück, my father fled and I only saw him again after the war. My foster-brother Hugo G., who as a blond man was not so conspicuous, as well as my brother and myself had to work on the fields for farmers during the day, slept in barns or in the forest and out-



doors at night, in permanent fear of arrest—since then I have always been sick, I have asthma and chronic bronchitis." Anna H. also witnessed the deportation of her parents and spent a number of years in a labor camp herself. "The memories of what I experienced in the past haunt me day and night, and it takes all my strength, calmness and time before I can recover somewhat, and even then I can only manage it with the help of medication."

The City of Vienna's special representative for restitution, Kurt Scholz, a great humanist, reminds us that those who were victims of the most brutal persecution due to the National Socialist hierarchy of "values" in many cases ultimately received the least compensation. "A political opponent who was an Aryan had the best chances of surviving persecution—a Polish Jew or a gypsy the worst." One can therefore imagine the treatment meted out to the Hungarian forced laborer No. 2/S 21263, whose father was a Jew and mother a Romani. He was abused as a human guinea pig for medical tests, tortured with injections and subjected to repeated examinations of his spinal cord because of the hump on his back—until the Hungarian driver of a laundry van hid him under dirty sheets and smuggled him to relatives in Vienna, who then arranged for him to go to Sopron where he lived until the end of the war.

"Asocials" and Yenish Were Humiliated

In this connection, we should not forget those people who, even without a racial background, were branded by the Nazis as "work shy" and "asocial elements." Already banished to the margins of society, they now became complete outcasts. As the majority of Roma was also deemed to be "asocial," the line between the reasons for persecution were frequently blurred. Margarete K. K. lived with her six children Margarete, Else, Magda, Julia, Valerie and Zoltan and her granddaughter Ingeborg in Käs-mark, Slovakia. Her husband was a skilled handworker, but a notorious drunkard. They all lived in desolate conditions, were undernourished and "probably degenerated" as an official certificate from the time attested. The same source describes the family's living conditions in a single tiny



room as "extremely unhealthy," and "above all objectionable for moral reasons." It was therefore decreed that the morals of these "asocials" would be improved by forcibly resettling them in Germany. No effort was too great when it was a matter of upholding National Socialist racial morality.

The Nazis also regarded the so-called Yenish as "asocials" or "half-gypsies" and treated them accordingly. Their origins can be traced back to the class of rural poor in Tyrol, Switzerland and Southern Germany. Comparisons with the Roma came about because the Yenish had adopted a nomadic lifestyle in the 17th and 18th centuries and as a traditionally marginalized group pursued similar professions as the Roma: knife grinders, basket makers, rag collectors. Because they often have a paler skin than the Roma they are also known as "white gypsies." They speak a language of their own, which incorporates elements of German, Yiddish, Hebrew, Romanes and Rotwelsch. Ernestine W. from Lower Austria was one Yenish woman who approached the Austrian Reconciliation Fund as a former forced laborer. Her account: "My father was called up to serve in the Wehrmacht in 1941. I was eleven at the time and the eldest of five children. My mother and I had to work for a farmer, were assigned the lowest work and were abused as 'gypsies' and 'grinders' because my father and grandfather had been grinders. We were humiliated by both adults and children. Nevertheless, we were happy that we at least received a little food." Her birth certificate identifies her as the daughter of a peddler and a traveling grinder's daughter.

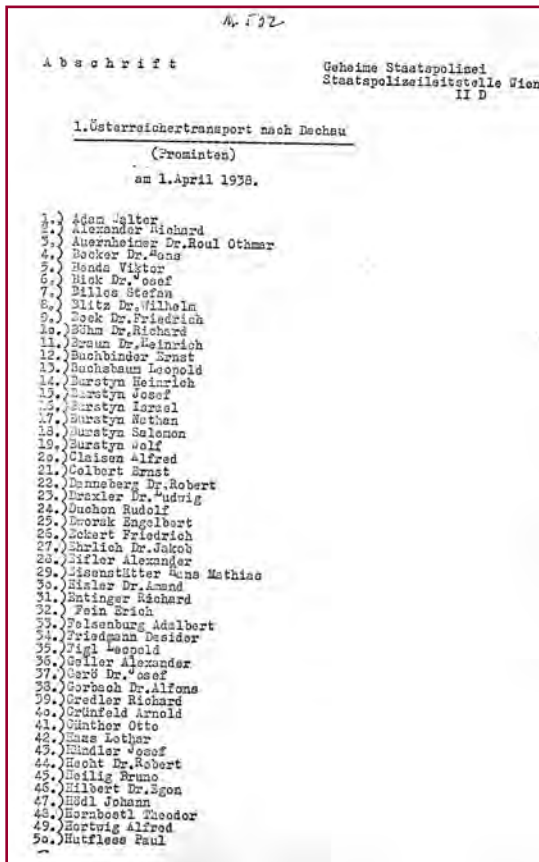
The family of Karl S. was also forced to leave its apartment in what is now Lower Austria and move to the Waldviertel district in their caravan because of their Yenish lineage. At times, members of the family were forced to hide in the forest and survived by carrying out odd jobs. When he appeared in public, Karl S. was subjected to continuous verbal abuse and humiliation and was finally, together with his father, assigned to construct fortifications and entrenchments. Two of his mother's brothers died at Mauthausen concentration camp.



Politically Persecuted Austrians

Compared with the sections of the population described above that were categorized as the "dregs of society" in the National Socialist racial hierarchy, "Aryans" who were "only" deemed to be politically unreliable generally had higher chances of survival. Of course, this categorization did not save them from harsh action by the new regime. Some 70,000 Austrian men and women were arrested at least briefly after the invasion of the German army in spring 1938, many of them were also detained for longer periods. On March 15, 1938, 250,000 people gathered on Heldenplatz to cheer Hitler, who had promised, not least of all, to deliver them from mass unemployment. At the same time, the first transport with leading Austrian politicians—the elite of the authoritarian corporatist state together with Social Democrats and Communists—was assembled and on April 1 departed for Dachau concentration camp near Munich. The prisoners included Leopold Figl and Alphons Gorbach, both of whom were later to become chancellors of Austria, Fritz Bock who was to become vice chancellor, Franz Olah, later to become minister of the interior and president of the Austrian Trade Union Federation and Viktor Matejka, who was subsequently to become a City of Vienna councilman. In addition to some 65,500 Austrian Jews, more than 15,000 non-Jewish Austrians also became victims of Nazi persecution; at least 1,200 were sentenced to death and executed by so-called People's Courts for active resistance against the Nazi regime.

The thousands of known opponents to Hitler's policies who survived did not have an easy life. As a rule, they had to carry out "classic" prison work: make uniforms, sew military caps, operate looms, glue small bags and other such tasks. A higher-than-average percentage of victims were Communists, although it must be remembered that following the collapse of armed Social Democratic resistance against the authoritarian regime in 1934, many disappointed Social Democrats had defected to the Communist camp. One of them, Wilhelm S., had first been active in the socialist youth movement, the children's organization Kinderfreunde and the Red Falcons, and later joined the Communist Party. He was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for preparing to commit high treason, two years of which he spent doing forced labor at an armaments factory in



These names headed the list of prominent Austrians who were deported to Dachau concentration camp on April 1, 1938: Friedrich Bock, Leopold Figl, Alfons Gorbach, further back Viktor Matejka and Franz Olah.
Source: DÖW

what is now Upper Austria. "Despite serious illness, I had to work twelve hours a day, was housed with some 300 other prisoners in inhumane unhygienic conditions in an attic story and was tortured for ten months in terrible interrogations," he later wrote. "Ever since my release, I have suffered serious physical and mental problems and had to take on a less well paid job in a different profession than the one I had been trained for."

Prof. Karl F. from Wiener Neustadt experienced similar sufferings and since 1945 has described the events of the period in countless publications. He was arrested as a member of the resistance in 1939, and both before his trial in Wiener Neustadt and after

his conviction had to carry out forced labor at the prison in Graz-Karlau and other prisons in Vienna. He was also imprisoned in the Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps before the hour of liberation arrived.

The Salzburg historian Ernst Hanisch puts the percentage of Communists among Austrian Nazi victims at around 44 percent, that of the Catholic conservatives at 23 percent. Because her family was categorized as "politically unreliable," 17-year-old Margareta S. was conscripted to work in an armaments factory and, like foreign forced laborers, was not permitted to enter air raid shelters during air attacks. On one occasion she was buried



beneath rubble and was only dug out after several hours. Her mother, a known monarchist, was conscripted for labor, and her father, a country policeman, transferred to Poland. Helene Augusta B. from Burgenland spent six months in the custody of the Gestapo after it became known that she had expressed regret at the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life at Bürgerbräukeller in Munich. She was then compelled to work at a health insurance fund and then at an agricultural college. Franz L. from Lower Austria was locked up for two months and forced to do office work after tearing down a demagogic Nazi poster against the British prime minister Winston Churchill.

The farmer Johann M. from a village in the district of Waidhofen an der Thaya suffered a particularly tragic fate. He was kept under surveillance from March 1938 onward because as the parish youth group leader, chairman of the Catholic Reichsbund and owner of books critical of the National Socialist Party, he was considered to be politically unreliable. Unfit for service after being wounded on the front, he was arrested at work one day because another worker had denounced him for having doubted that Germany would win the war and for supporting the resurrection of Austria. After being threatened with concentration camp, Johann M. made a partial confession on the advice of someone who knew what he was talking about ("anything but concentration camp") and, despite several witnesses who testified in his favor, was sentenced to death by the district court in Vienna for "preparing to commit high treason, assisting the enemy and demoralizing the German people." There followed six dreadful months in the "death cell," and during air raids three prisoners were chained together to prevent them leaving the cell. He experienced the execution of 65 of his fellow prisoners, including eight with whom he had shared a cell. One of them had recommended that he try to invent something for the agricultural sector that would make a vital contribution to the war effort and that could result in his being shown clemency. With diagrams born of a desperate imagination, he did indeed obtain a reprieve and in fall 1944 his sentence was commuted to 15 years in jail. Having escaped from his living hell in which his daily prayers and frequent visits from the prison chaplain had played a vital role in sustaining him, he had to help defuse bombs throughout Vienna as part of a bomb disposal unit. Following an attempted escape, he endured further air raids in a prison tower for prisoners thought to present a high risk of escape. On April 6, 1945, he was re-



leased on the grounds of a "wartime emergency" and made his way home to the Waldviertel district on train buffers and on foot, seeking solace in churches as he went.

The Long Ordeal of the Slovenes

Austrian victims of political persecution also included one group of people about whom some of their compatriots still find it hard to talk sensitively and fairly even today: the Carinthian Slovenes. Categorized as enemies of the people by Nazi ideology and subjected to persecution, many of them joined the Communist dominated partisans in former Yugoslavia and as such participated in military action in Carinthia which even those members of the civilian population who did not support National Socialism perceived as hostile. The Slovenian conflict in Carinthia has historic roots that extend far back into history. Slovenes first settled here in the seventh century and had to assert themselves both against Bavarian troops and soldiers of the imperial Counter Reformation. During the breakup of the Habsburg Monarchy, many of them at first showed a preference for unification with a South Slav state. On the other hand, the majority affirmation of the unity of Carinthia in the 1920 referendum ensured that Southern Carinthia remained part of Austria. The fact that parts of Carinthia, including the provincial capital Klagenfurt, were occupied by Serb troops in 1918 and that maps were circulated showing Southern Carinthia as part of Yugoslavia after the creation of that state naturally stirred up much distrust. In the Nazi period, more than 900 Slovenes were forcibly resettled away from Carinthia, driving no small number of Carinthian Slovenes to join Tito's partisans, not least of all in an effort to avoid conscription into the German Wehrmacht. However, when, for example, partisans attacked police stations in Carinthia at night, killing or kidnapping police officers, the partisans regarded such actions as acts of war against their persecutors, while local residents regarded them as attacks against "the German Carinthians." In order to survive, partisans also had to steal cattle and sheep. This hit the farming population so hard that they regarded the partisans less as freedom fighters than as thieves and robbers.



Paul-Miroslav S. reports that he was accepted into a Carinthian resistance group formed by the Scouts as early as 1938. In 1941, when he was ten years old, he saw his father carried off by SS henchmen. Later the lad was arrested for sabotage, brutally interrogated and repeatedly tortured. Even today his face is disfigured as a result of the damage to his nerve cords, he can only breathe through his mouth and had to develop new techniques that enabled him to eat without suffocating. Splinters in his back from objects that were used to beat him caused severe pain for 50 years until they were removed in an operation in 1995. A doctor in the prison hospital helped him to escape—it was only logical that Paul-Miroslav S. now became an active partisan fighter. The woman he was later to marry and her brother were also deported from Carinthia and had to carry out forced labor. She gave a moving account of her experiences in a documentary program by the Austrian Broadcasting Company shown on April 19, 2004.

One individual case out of many—tragic entanglements of personal fates with historic and political conflicts that are hard to comprehend intellectually and that in many hearts still rage as emotional volcanoes. The collapse of the evil National Socialist regime did not eliminate the conflict over night, instead it manifested itself again and again in weakening eruptions that only gradually subsided. In the years after 1945, the Roman Catholic Church in the province made systematic and determined efforts to heal the conflict. The collapse of the Soviet empire and the accession of a democratic peace-loving Slovenia to the European Union have now finally broken down most of the barriers. Although scars remain, most of the wounds are now healed. The Austrian Reconciliation Fund also tried to make a symbolic contribution to this process.

"Rassenschande" and Homosexuality

"I, Hedwig H., daughter of Hermine R., deceased, witnessed the arrest of my mother when I was eight years old. She was bald and had a placard around her neck saying 'this pig messes around with prisoners of war.'" The villagers spat at her, swore at her and threw stones at her. The Gestapo



took her around the entire village. At school, the other children swore at me, the headmaster hit me and even the priest repeatedly boxed my ears." This account refers to an agricultural worker in Lower Austria who in 1941 was sentenced by a special tribunal of the district court in Vienna to two years in prison for violating the "penal provisions against the demoralization of the German people" by having "friendly relations" and even sexual intercourse with a Polish prisoner of war. In its findings, the court stated that "sexual intercourse between a woman, who moreover is the mother of five children, and a prisoner of war is arguably one of the most serious breaches possible of the aforementioned regulations and represents one of the grossest violations of healthy public morals." It was these "healthy public morals" that had also prompted the villagers to shave the woman's head. In the women's prison, she had to clean toilets and shoes, carry wood and coal—all the time worrying about her children.

Gertrude W. from Vienna also experienced the consequences of *Rassenschande*—she had a Jewish boyfriend—at the workhouse in Klosterneuburg: dragging coal, chiseling out pipes and wires, cleaning at hospitals until her hands bled, working together with prostitutes, women who "refused to work" and prisoners of war, confinement to quarters, no visitors. But there was at least a happy end for her: After the war she was indeed able to marry her boyfriend.

Homophiles such as Erwin W. from Tyrol also endured a bitter fate. He was arrested in early 1944 for homosexual acts and imprisoned first of all in the Wehrmacht prison in Vienna, and then in two penal institutions. There he was assigned to carry out heavy forced labor—and only released in May 1946! Every fifth homosexual in the Third Reich ended up in a concentration camp, where they had to wear pink triangles to distinguish them from Jews and political prisoners and were often exposed to additional harassment from fellow prisoners. According to the primitive National Socialist ideology, there was only "natural" or "good" sexuality among people of the same race, everything else was "perverted"—both homosexuality and sexual intercourse with "enemies of the people." Such dreadful categorizations should be kept in mind when discussing the fair evaluation of freely chosen sexual preferences in today's democratic society.



Wehrmacht Deserters Were Also Included

Another sensitive issue on which the Austrian Reconciliation Fund decided to adopt a generous interpretation was the treatment of individuals who had deserted from the Wehrmacht and were punished for it—if not immediately by death, then by imprisonment and forced labor. For a long time, this was an extremely sensitive subject and to some extent remains so today because many of those who had to join the Wehrmacht and held out to the end (at least in the final stages of the war extremely reluctantly) regarded desertion as a violation of solidarity: "I was no better off than he was in prison and he is supposed to get compensation?" On the other hand, deserters could rightly ask whether the courage they showed in forcibly breaking with the regime at the risk of their lives should not be honored in some form by the democracy that followed. If there had been mass desertions, the terrible war would have ended sooner!

The Reconciliation Fund did not enter into discussions of such a fundamental nature, instead making pragmatic but humane decisions. Anybody who had to carry out forced labor while in prison or work for their survival while living underground would be compensated in accordance with the applicable provisions of the law. Karl G. from Vienna was sentenced to death by a Luftwaffe field court for desertion in mid-1943, a sentence that almost a year later was commuted to three years imprisonment. Working from prison, he had to search for, retrieve and defuse delayed-action aircraft bombs that had not detonated—logically an activity with a high death rate. It therefore stands to reason that he made several attempts at escape, the last one of which in January 1945 was successful. Karl G. survived by hiding in the ruins of bombed-out buildings in Vienna. Another man from Vienna, Karl P., persuaded two comrades to help him mutilate himself in an effort to avoid being sent to the front. They managed to tear two ligaments in his knee, which Karl P. tried to explain by saying that he had had a cycling accident. However, the Gestapo became suspicious and subjected him to severe interrogations at their headquarters on Morzinplatz and then in the Rossauer Barracks. When they confronted him with the confession of one of his helpers and threatened to take away his two children, he admitted the self-mutilation. During the imprisonment that followed, he was assigned to carry out various forms of work.

Those Who Put Jehovah and the Bible Above Hitler...

Being a Jew, Rom, or disabled was something one either was or was not, one's own will was beside the point. However religious convictions that were diametrically opposed to National Socialism were a matter of choice and could be abjured. Anyone who did not do so could expect to be brutally persecuted by the Nazi regime. All Christians should have had to face the dilemma of making a personal decision, but as 90 percent of a population could not be exposed to persecution, National Socialist propaganda pulled the wool over Christians' eyes, leading many to believe that religious and Nazi convictions were compatible. Cases of resistance among members of the Catholic Church were isolated, but vehement. Especially well known are the executions of the Augustinian canon Roman Scholz, who had formed a resistance group, and the stubborn conscientious ob-



On February 23, 1944, the Augustinian canon Roman Scholz from the monastery in Klosterneuburg was sentenced to death and then beheaded in Vienna for preparing to commit high treason.

Source: DÖW

jector Franz Jägerstätter. Others liquidated by the Nazi regime as political opponents included the Tyrolean priests Jakob Gapp and Otto Neururer and the Lower Austrian nun Restituta Kafka.

However, religious minorities that were referred to collectively as "sects" were specifically targeted for persecution. The Internationale Bibelforscher-Vereinigung [International Association of Bible Students] (the generic term Bible Students was popularly used to refer to Jehovah's Witnesses) came to the attention of the Nazis because their members refused to perform military service as a matter of principle. It was not uncommon for them to be sentenced to prison, concentration camp or executed for "demoralization." In 1999, the Documentation Center of



Austrian Resistance published a book called *Zeugen Jehovas – Vergessene Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* [Jehovah's Witnesses—Forgotten Victims of National Socialism].

The parents of Maximilian T. were members of this religious group. The ten-year old boy and his two brothers were first sent to reform school and then placed with various farmers in Eastern Styria in order to separate them from their parents and one another. Max had to carry out heavy agricultural labor with no social insurance. He was often forbidden to attend school on the grounds that he was needed for work, but also because of his refusal to give the Hitler salute. In 1944, his eldest brother Franz was executed in Kiel for conscientious objection.

The parents of Franz R., an Australian who originally came from Styria, were also practicing Jehovah's Witnesses. The boy and his sister were therefore separated from them and placed in a youth camp in Burgenland, from where they were taken to farmers for agricultural work. He too was supposed to give the Hitler salute and was beaten for his refusal. At school, he continued to say "Grüß Gott" and not "Heil Hitler," wet his pants in fear of the blows that would follow, and was punished by being beaten even more. In another form of punishment, cigarettes were stubbed out on his body: "You can still see the marks on my arms." In winter, the children were made to stand barefoot in snow while waiting for their punishment. They wrapped old rags and paper around their freezing feet or waited until a cow raised its tail and they could stand in the warm urine. After four years, the Gestapo picked them up in a truck in June 1944. "Off to the gas chambers!" the chilling words. "The power of Jehovah must have been involved," Franz R. later said. "For no apparent reason we were put on a train and taken home to our village." Free!

Children as Medical Research Material

The horrifying balance sheet of National Socialist rule would be left inexcusably incomplete if no mention were made of those who were left to the mercy of the regime as "life unworthy of life": people who were physically



The chimneys smoked at Hartheim Castle (Upper Austria): euthanasia victims were cremated here.

Source: Dokumentationsstelle Hartheim des Oberösterreichischen Landesarchivs / (*)

or mentally handicapped or both. On the territory of present-day Austria, Schloss Hartheim near Linz and the psychiatric hospital Baumgartner Höhe in Vienna (in those days the clinic Am Spiegelgrund and the orphanage at Baumgartner Höhe) gained notoriety because between 1940 and 1944 experiments were systematically conducted on "lives unworthy of life." However, there were also other new or converted reformatories and "care institutions" where "difficult," "asocial" and "alien" children or simply the offspring of Volksschädlingen (parasites) were detained. The Foster Care Service (Kinderübernahmestelle or KÜST) on Vienna's Lustkandlgasse was a notorious administrative and distribution center.

The legal basis for this approach was provided by the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Progeny of 1940, which obliged doctors and midwives to report disabled children to the health offices. The children were given a pro forma medical examination and transferred to clinics or the special establishments referred to earlier and, after all kinds of medical experiments had been performed on them, were "treated" to death. There

(*) NARA II, RG 549, Records of Headquarters, U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR), War Crimes Branch War Crimes Case files ("Cases not tried"), 1944-48, Box 490, Case 000-12-463 Hartheim (P) VOL I/A)



were six large euthanasia clinics in the German Reich, including the one in Schloss Hartheim, and at least 37 pediatric units that requested, received and carried out authorizations to kill from Berlin. The Psychiatric Hospital Am Steinhof in Vienna was considered to be the most modern hospital of its kind in the world when it was opened in 1907. During the Nazi period, a notorious pediatric unit (which became known as the Death Ward), a reform school (above all for forced sterilizations and killing by means of poison or lethal injections) and a work center for "asocial" women and girls were established there.

Euthanasia doctor Heinrich Gross carried out medical experiments with particular enthusiasm, using the brains of children who had been systematically murdered for research purposes. After the war, legal proceedings against him were dropped and he became a leading court-appointed expert. When he finally went on trial for the second time in 2000, Gross proved unfit to stand trial due to senility.

The Upper Austrian provincial government has held several memorial services at Schloss Hartheim, and in 2003, a special exhibition was opened there on *The Value of Life*.

Not a Single Day Without Suffering and Agony

One of the thousands of Viennese victims was Rudolf K., an illegitimate child born in 1938 who grew up with two siblings in his grandmother's house with seven other people, and was beaten by his aunts and uncles ("because they had to support us three children"). He had already spent a lengthy period in the hospital with bronchitis and had been beaten up on the street in 1940 for failing to salute a swastika flag before being taken to Spiegelgrund via the KÜST, after his grandmother had applied for an increase in the 28 Reichsmark care allowance. "There was not a single day without suffering and agony," he now recalls. "We were deprived of food, made to stand in front of the bed for hours instead of being allowed to sleep, had punishment drill, were boxed on our ears, given injections to make us vomit, dunked in the bathtub and made to stand for long peri-



Orthopedic Operations and Wheelchairs

Two Special Schemes Organized by the Reconciliation Fund that Gave the Gift of Happiness

Recipients of compensation payments from the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, especially in East and South East Europe, repeatedly declared, "Now we can finally afford a necessary operation!" Some family members however also wrote of a "...decent funeral for our mother, our father." The reference to operations eventually resulted in an imaginative idea: could such operations possibly be performed in Austria in special cases?

The Austrian Society for Orthopedic Medicine and Orthopedic Surgery immediately offered its assistance, and a very practical model was unbureaucratically organized for countries with partner organizations. The Austrian Reconciliation Fund paid for passports, visas, the transport of the patient (who had to have been awarded a compensation payment under the Forced Laborer's Act) and the traveling costs of a person to accompany the patient; the Austrian hospitals bore all the medical costs. In every case, doctors in the patient's own country established whether the transport and operation actually made sense. All 31 of the patients who received their operation in this manner were extremely happy about it. The idea of providing former forced laborers with impaired mobility with a wheelchair from Austria

was first raised by the Ukrainians when an Austrian spot-check team visited that country, and then also by Belarus. Once again it was agreed in Vienna that this form of assistance would be granted to needy individuals in all countries with partner organizations, and Christoph Kainz, executive officer of Platform Humanitarian Action established by the Austrian business community, immediately got to work. Within a short period, he had collected a large number of used wheelchairs in good condition from hospitals and other institutions that were supposed to reach those who so urgently needed them in time for Christmas 2003.

Before that, there was a tremendous amount of red tape that needed to be cut through. Ukraine and Hungary demanded official confirmation that each wheelchair had been disinfected, Russia and Ukraine also wanted deeds of gifts and confirmation from the customs authorities. The disinfection certificates were considerably more difficult to obtain than the wheelchairs themselves—until it emerged that the easiest thing was to allow the Austrian Armed Forces to disinfect all the wheelchairs and issue the certificates. This solution was in fact adopted. Austrian soldiers also carried





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out minor repairs, then the certificates were kept by the Austrian Ministry of Health for a time until everything had finally been registered and signed. The happy day for 261 wheelchair recipients arrived in spring instead of winter, but it

was still not too late. Georg Magerl, who was responsible at the Austrian Reconciliation Fund for the management of both projects, recalls: "Everyone was grateful for the increased mobility and the improved quality of life."

belly crawling and beatings; unforgotten the sight of a two-wheeled cart in which the corpses of small children were drawn by. In contrast to the occurrences at concentration camps and prisons, which most outsiders were unaware of in many respects, these measures were not completely hidden from a broader public. However, due to increasing opposition from the population at large, and church circles in particular, experiments in connection with hereditary diseases on children were abandoned throughout the entire German Reich in 1944. However, by this time at least 30,000 mentally and/or physically disabled people, including concentration camp prisoners who were no longer able to perform useful work, had been delivered up for a "good death" (euthanasia).



›Outcome and Outlook‹

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Some 352 Million Euros for 132,000 Applicants

By the middle of 2005, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund had approved approximately 132,000 applications from former slave and forced laborers and disbursed some 352 million euros. A total of 14,412 applications had to be rejected, 5,447 were forwarded to the German Foundation under whose jurisdiction they fell. In all, 102,085 applications were processed by the Reconciliation Fund's partner organizations and then approved by the Reconciliation Fund Committee following verification by the spot-check team. The Reconciliation Fund in Vienna also processed and approved almost 30,000 individual applications that had been submitted directly to the Fund. The majority of applications submitted through partner organizations (almost 42 percent) came from Ukraine: by May 25, 2005, 42,661 applications had been approved. The second-largest number (22,693 or 22 percent) was from Poland, the Russian Federation (12,708 or 12.5 percent), the Czech Republic (10,946 or just under 11 percent), Hungary (8,730 or 8.5 percent) and Belarus (formerly White Russia, 4,347 or 4 percent).

If one compares the figures, it becomes apparent that more than two and a half times more people from Poland were deployed in the agricultural sector than in industry. Among the Ukrainians, forced laborers in agriculture outnumbered those in industry by several thousand. By far the largest number of slave laborers came from Hungary (more than 3,000), due to the particular structure of the victim groups (mostly Roma and Jewish workers, assigned to build the South Eastern Defensive Wall). Both Russia and Belarus supplied considerably more industrial than agricultural workers while the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia supplied 42 times more industrial workers than agricultural laborers. By the end of 2004, more than 237 million euros had been disbursed through six partner organizations. With regard to the country statistics, it should be borne in mind that these refer to the states in which the former forced laborers now live and in many cases are not identical with their country of origin. Seventy percent of the 29,493 applications that had been submitted directly to the Reconciliation Fund in Vienna and approved by May 25, 2005, were from forced laborers who had been assigned to industry, almost 18 percent were from slave laborers and 12 percent from agricultural laborers. A total sum of more than 97 million euros was disbursed to these individuals. It is



conspicuous that a far higher percentage of applications from forced laborers who had carried out the most heavy forms of labor were submitted directly and not through partner organizations. There is a number of different reasons for this that cannot be explained in detail here. A comparison of the countries from which the individual applications were received shows that by far the greatest number came from France (6,447), followed by the USA (3,290) and Israel (3,095). More than 1,000 individual applications were sent from Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Canada and Germany (mostly from German Sinti). In terms of the total payments made to each country, the order varies slightly. However, France still heads the tables of individual applications with 17.9 million euros, followed by Israel (16.6 million euros), the USA (13.6 million euros), Serbia and Montenegro, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Germany and Canada. The fact that Austria has a relatively large number of recipients (1,779, 6.5 million euros) is due not least of all to the fact that approximately half the individuals concerned were former foreign forced laborers who remained in Austria after the war. In addition to the payments to people who had applied through partner organizations or directly, 15 million US dollars were also awarded to the Claims Conference that is responsible for Jewish compensation claims.

A Kiss on the Hand for an Orange, a Rose for Mozart

How did the recipients of these token compensation payments react? The answer is remarkable: Like many people who have suffered grievously, they responded reflectively, modestly and in the vast majority of cases, with gratitude. In a moving gesture, a book with Ukrainian folk songs was enclosed with one of the many letters of thanks. Recipients repeatedly explained what they would do with the money: cover the costs of doctors and operations, medicine and rehabilitation treatments. In the case of Taisiya Fedorivna L. from Chmelitzkii in Ukraine, who is not only frail but also blind and deaf, it was her neighbors who completed the formalities and then first of all bought her an orange for two rubles. She kissed their hand in gratitude. Petr Leonidovic M. from Donezk, who lives at subsistence level on his meager ruble pension and who regularly has to cover the



costs of hospital stays, wanted to know how he could obtain an Austrian visa. He desperately wanted to see his "home country" Austria, where he was born and visit the grave of his father in Leoben; he loved "Austria, the mountains and Empress Sissi," he said. Lidia Vasilyevna D. from the same town had a similar wish. She too regards Leoben as her "home" and wishes to search for her father's grave.

Katalin G., a Jewess now living in Israel, was interested in another grave. She combined her thanks with the memory that someone had told her the cemetery where Mozart was buried was not far from her factory. As a passionate music lover, she included a rose for Mozart's final resting place in her letter. Dan R. from the USA wrote that even though the money he had received was only a "token symbol," he regarded it as "an important one" and thanked "the government and the people of Austria." In the case of Valentina Nikolaevna B. from the Crimea, it was her son who took delivery of the money as his mother was nearing the end of her life. "The compensation should have come much sooner, but you know that anyway," he wrote to Vienna. "At any rate, I would like to thank you that we will be able to cover the costs of the funeral." Others expressed similar sentiments. "My father is dying, the money will be used for his funeral," said Mustafaev T. from Samarkand (Uzbekistan) as he wept on the telephone. Nina Ivanivna M. in Altchevsk was worried, about whether "they will give us the money? Will we still be alive? At least for a funeral so that we won't be buried like dogs?" She received her money.

Anna Maria K. who now lives in the Innviertel district in Austria had a nasty experience. She and her husband were "delighted" with the compensation, but after an Upper Austrian newspaper reported the case, the family received sickeningly offensive letters. "The Austrians are idiots, they pay everyone... Hopefully, the money will not bring you happiness... If there is no earthly justice may God, if there is one, send you a terminal illness..." The woman is convinced that the letters came from people she did not know—the people in her town "would be horrified by a letter like that." Her husband was horrified and deeply hurt too. He suffered a collapsed lung and two heart attacks and died a week later."

Understandably, "too late" and "too little" were frequent objections. Aleksander C. found the demand for a written waiver of further claims against



Germany most unfair. The legal misunderstanding was cleared up when it was explained to him that the law prohibited claims being made simultaneously against both Germany and Austria. That was why the waivers made future claims against Germany and Austria impossible. Yuri Nikolajevic T. from Dnjepropetrovsk regarded that as "blackmail" and as "a breach of civil liberties in civilized states." However, this assumption was also a legal misunderstanding. In contrast, Anna Pavlovna S. from Dnjepropetrovsk prays for her benefactors in Vienna every day, wishing them "health and eternal life." She and her husband had saved up for a funeral, but when her husband died the bank informed her that the computer had no record of a single ruble. Now the problem was solved. Incidentally, when money was withdrawn from Russian and Ukrainian banks, recipients frequently expressed doubt about whether the money would be safe in a savings account at a local bank. Some recipients preferred to convert the money into euros or dollars immediately and take the cash home.

Help Received in Austria Was Never Forgotten

The wife of Kostjantin Ivanovitsch K. from Donezk described another strategy for coming to terms with the memories of a terrible past. For a long time, the family had not spoken about the years of forced labor in order not to arouse suspicion that they were traitors to the fatherland. Her husband had been a musician and composer, a highly educated man, but now he "was only a shadow of his former self." She was touched and pleased to receive a telephone call enquiring about his health. A Greek woman, Evriklia S., described the work her parents had performed at various factories in Linz. "They never forgot the help they received from ordinary Austrians," she said.

One of those who suffered most, the Hungarian Jew Andrew Lenard, wrote expressing his gratitude to "the political bodies in Austria who founded the Reconciliation Fund, regardless of whether I am deemed eligible to receive compensation or not." His next sentence can only be properly understood if one remembers that the alternative to his fate would have been deportation to the concentration camp in Auschwitz. "I am also deeply



grateful to fate for having brought me and my family to work in Austria..." Time and again, individual men and women had positive experiences with compassionate people in Austria—then or at a later date. One gentleman impressed a Reconciliation Fund desk officer as he told her how his family (who owned a jewelry shop in Vienna) had fled from the Nazis to Budapest, how at the age of 16 he had been deported to dig ditches and was then driven to Mauthausen in one of the notorious death marches. He survived, returned to Hungary, fled from there to Vienna in 1956 when the freedom fighters were rounded up and now runs a small jewelry shop again. "Here, in the country where he and many of his fellow countrymen experienced such inhumanity in 1938 and once again in 1944/45?" she asked. "Yes, because in 1956 the Austrians helped us a great deal."

Professor J. F. from Brussels thanked and congratulated the Reconciliation Fund for its "polite and tactful approach" during the compensation procedures. Erwin R. from Paris expressed similar sentiments in a letter to his contact in Vienna. "I was in your office to collect a sum of money. However, I received a gift that was a thousand times more valuable! Thanks to your humanity I have regained my belief in man's better nature and regard you as a good and dear friend." The Crimean Tatar Fikret Yurter, a brother of the author mentioned in chapter 4, Feyzi Rahman Yurter, was assigned to recover corpses under particularly humiliating circumstances during the Nazi period. He now donated the entire 7,630 euros that he had been awarded as a former slave laborer to the primary school in Alberschwende in Vorarlberg. It was here that he had learned to read and write after the war, before going to Germany to study engineering and emigrating to the USA. "That was the basis for my later success in life," he proudly and gratefully assured Reconciliation Fund desk officer Pinar Düzel, who had competently processed his Turkish-language application. And everybody echoed the words that accompanied the thanks of Marija Ivanovna N. from the Crimea ("you have prolonged my life"): "Such terrible things should never be allowed to happen again."



The Critical Confrontation with History Continues

"Never again!" It is impossible to overlook the determination to prevent the kind of terrible atrocities that were the order of the day under Nazi rule, during World War II and for decades in the sphere of influence of Soviet Communism as shaped by Stalin from ever happening again. In Austria itself, the process of symbolically compensating former forced laborers has contributed to a critical process of self-discovery, and the activities of the Reconciliation Fund have led to greater levels of awareness. In the "memorial year" 2005, we remember the liberation from National Socialism and the end of World War II in 1945, but also the regaining of full sovereignty through the State Treaty in 1955 and Austria's accession to the European Union (EU) in 1995. In an interview with *Die Presse* published on February 12, 2005, Austrian President Heinz Fischer said that "we can quarrel about the future, but should strive for consensus regarding the past," explaining that well-meant gestures alone were insufficient. "It is something that must grow, heal, competing views must chafe against one another, historians have to play their part and a synthesis must emerge ... The chapter cannot simply be closed artificially."

Indeed, Austrian historians have continued their research, a fact that was reflected in a conference held in Moscow on the "The Red Army in Austria 1945–1955," and which was also attended by retired ambassador Herbert Grubmayr from the Austrian Reconciliation Fund. Feelings ran high during the very open discussions about this sensitive issue but in the end, the participating historians, diplomats and contemporary witnesses agreed that the conference (which had been organized by the Boltzmann Institute in Graz under Professor Stefan Karner) had contributed to a better mutual understanding and should therefore be followed up. Austrian historians also swiftly continued research into other aspects of our more recent history. In Vienna, the Romano Centro that is run with so much enthusiasm by the former journalist Renata Erich promotes the integration not only of those Roma who have resided in Austria for a long time, but also those who have arrived more recently in the course of economic migration.

Other commemorative gestures have also been made in a non-material form, particularly for former forced laborers on the territory of present-



day Austria. The working group Forced Labor in Schwarzatal published the diary of a former forced laborer Francis Jeanno, providing another opportunity to gain an impression of living conditions in this part of Lower Austria in those days. At a moving ceremony that reunited the former forced laborer with his erstwhile "family" in Ternitz, the speaker from the Reconciliation Fund Jürgen Strasser recalled how one of Jeanno's compatriots who had survived the death march from Berndorf to Mauthausen had made a significant donation to the humanitarian project Light into Darkness because he wanted to answer Austria's symbolic gesture with one of his own.

As other countries also celebrated the end of Nazi rule and World War II, the painful events of recent history were also remembered beyond Austria's borders. In the Czech Republic, every attempt to justify the expulsion of all ethnic Germans (including those who were anti-Nazi) from former Czechoslovakia after 1945 is followed by admonitions from Czech citizens who advocate a more critical view of national history. The former Czech president Václav Hável and the former Czech ambassador to Austria, Jiří Gruša, who has since become the first foreigner to be appointed as director of the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, have made several appeals in this direction. In June 2005, Poland and Ukraine tried to bury their many years of bloody conflict and expulsions after the two World Wars with a gesture of reconciliation at the military cemetery in Lviv in West Ukraine. In Slovenia, attention has now been focused not only the oppression by Nazi Germany, but also the oppression by Mussolini's Italy as well as the murder and expulsion of large numbers of Italians ("Esuli") from post-war communist Yugoslavia.

It was not in vain therefore that in the commemorative year 2005, personalities from politics and the churches in Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary called for further steps toward European reconciliation in a letter to members of the European Parliament. World War II was "still an open and painful wound" in several respects, they wrote. "We ask you to use the anniversary of the end of the war to take practical steps to close this chapter of European and world history in a spirit of justice and reconciliation." This includes being aware "that the victorious side also occasionally got carried away and committed actions which deserve to be condemned." The Austrian signatories of this letter included the re-



spected former EU commissioner Franz Fischler, former vice chancellor Erhard Busek, who is now EU Coordinator for the Stability Pact for South East Europe, the Viennese cardinal Christoph Schönborn and the Social Democratic spokesperson for European affairs, Caspar Einem.

The Partner Organizations Were Cooperative

The spirit of this appeal (and the requirements of the Reconciliation Fund Law) were in keeping with the decisions of the responsible bodies concerning the use of funds left over after the symbolic compensation of former forced and slave laborers. On July 7, 2004, the six partner organizations and the office of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund agreed to issue a joint statement declaring that the remaining capital should be used in the first instance to benefit surviving former slave and forced laborers who suffered injustice on the territory of present-day Austria. Secondly, the heirs of such victims would also be allowed to benefit. Eligible persons are those who find themselves in difficult material circumstances, and priority will be given to medical and social projects. The partner organizations undertook to draw up a priority list for the submitted projects and to handle them rapidly, if possible before the closure of the Reconciliation Fund. Funding would be allocated to the partner organizations in the six countries concerned (Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Belarus, the Czech Republic and Hungary) on the basis of the number of applications that had been submitted by these organizations and approved by Vienna.

The second half-year report 2004 of the Reconciliation Fund Board of Trustees to the Austrian Government (which was obliged to submit the report to the Steering Committee of the Nationalrat) once again cited the excellent and efficient cooperation between the Reconciliation Fund and its partner organizations. In 2004, the Reconciliation Fund had again examined thousands of applications, despite the formal deadline for submissions having expired at the end of 2003. A considerable number of the applications submitted in 2004 came from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva, which is also active on behalf of the German Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future. Most of

the applications had been submitted to IOM within the stipulated period. Many of the applications submitted by Roma only arrived in 2004 because their plausibility had to be verified, as the otherwise painstaking National Socialist bureaucracy had kept no records whatsoever about this ethnic group. The situation of the so-called Jewish street cleaners was similar, as the Nazi authorities had not documented their humiliation. The report states: "In cases of doubt, the Committee of the Reconciliation Fund has always decided in favor of the applicant." A number of applicants were also retrospectively placed in higher categories (and thus received additional payments) after new evidence was presented with regard to applications that had already been approved.

It was not until 2005 that the Reconciliation Fund stopped accepting applications because work finally had to be brought to a conclusion. This generous approach in Vienna, the second half-year report 2004 noted, "was much appreciated by the elderly victims concerned, approval that was reflected in frequently very touching thank-you letters." In order to ensure



Chancellor Schüssel thanks Ambassador Steiner and Secretary General Wotava for their work at the Austrian Reconciliation Fund.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund



that processing practices were above reproach, the Reconciliation Fund also pushed for the return of outstanding waivers of claims because this was the only way of arriving at an exact figure of how many compensation payments had been disbursed. By the middle of 2005, the Reconciliation Fund in Vienna had received 94 percent of the waivers from Russia and 99 percent of those from the other five partner countries. As a result, almost no money had to be returned by the partner organizations as would have been necessary in the event of failure to return the waivers.

Distribution of the Remaining 96 Million

One of the main concerns of the Austrian government's special representative had been that as the level of payments to be disbursed according to the category of forced labor had been defined in advance, it might become necessary to provide a further injection of cash if the Reconciliation Fund was inadequately endowed. However, Maria Schaumayer had done her math well and the number of expected applications, while significantly below the first scholarly estimates, was sufficiently high that at the end of its work, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund found itself facing a different problem. What should be done with the roughly 96 million euros that remained? Of course, some of those who had contributed to the Reconciliation Fund would have liked to have received a pro rata share of their contribution back. But everyone knew that the wording of the Reconciliation Fund Law had ruled out that possibility from the very beginning. Section 15 (2) stipulates that, "At the end of that time, the Board of Trustees may decide to spend the remaining capital of the Fund for payments in connection with wrongs that had taken place on the territory of the present-day Republic of Austria during the time of the National Socialist regime whereby particular consideration is to be given to the heirs of those slave laborers and forced laborers who died before the deadline."

It is therefore hardly surprising that as the date for this decision approached, speculation about who would receive the remaining money increased and that natural clashes of interests became noticeable. However, when the Board of Trustees gathered for the crucial meeting on De-




cember 20, 2004, it became apparent that excellent diplomatic work had been done in the run up. Under the chairmanship of Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, the Board unanimously agreed that the 96 million euros should be distributed in keeping with the intention of the law as follows:

- » 30 million would be allocated to carry out humanitarian projects benefiting former slave and forced laborers or their heirs through the six partner organizations. This sum also includes the related administrative costs;
- » a maximum amount of 25 million euros would be used to establish a foundation to disburse grants to persons from those states that had especially suffered under the recruitment of forced laborers by the Nazi regime;
- » a maximum amount of 20 million euros would be allocated for a Future Fund, the proceeds of which would be used to fund research into the sufferings caused during the Nazi period, to finance remembrance and promote tolerance both in Austria and the partner states;
- » 20 million euros would be paid to the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism;
- » a maximum amount of 5 million euros would be earmarked to settle unresolved issues in areas that had not been dealt with adequately in the past. The chairman of Board of Trustees had until October 1, 2005, to put forward specific proposals.

Humanitarian Projects in the Partner States

The office of the Reconciliation Fund has been instructed to implement as many of the approved projects as possible by the end of 2005, after having first examined each one for its conformity with the legal requirements. To enable immediate implementation of the projects, the Reconciliation Fund Board of Trustees decided in July 2004 to provide each of the six



partner organizations with pro rata advance payments to finance humanitarian projects before the adoption of a final resolution on the distribution of the remaining funds was adopted in December 2004. Any projects that have not been completed when the Reconciliation Fund is dissolved at the end of 2005 will be handled by the new Future Fund.

- » The German-Polish Reconciliation foundation promptly submitted projects for operations, spa treatments, nursing home care and the purchase of medical equipment for rehabilitation that would benefit former slave and forced laborers or subsequently their heirs. In accordance with the allocation formula based on the number of approved applications, 22 percent of 30 million euros was made available, or 6.7 million euros.
- » Even before the end of 2004, the Ukrainian national foundation Understanding and Reconciliation had applied for financing for hearing and other surgical operations, for treatments at spas and sanatoriums and for immediate financial assistance for especially needy persons (a total of 40,000 people). Given that just under 42 percent of all applications had been granted, just over 12.5 million euros were provided.
- » The foundation for Understanding and Reconciliation in Belarus wanted to use its share of the money to finance medical aids and rehabilitation equipment for some 4,300 people. As more than 4,000 applications had been approved, a good four percent of the remaining capital was released.
- » The foundation for Understanding and Reconciliation in Russia also gave priority to financing medical and technical aids. During the verification process, a number of questions arose for the Reconciliation Fund that had to be clarified during 2005. With almost 13,000 approved applications, Russia is already entitled to more than twelve percent of the 30 million euros.
- » The charitable foundation Jewish Legacy in Hungary mainly proposed one-off welfare payments for especially needy individuals and to pay for medical treatment. Some eight and a half percent of the remaining capital was available for this purpose. At the request of the overworked Hungarian partner organization, a member of the Reconciliation Fund



team who speaks perfect Hungarian occasionally assisted in the implementation of the project in Hungary itself.

- » The first request from the Czech Council for the Victims of National Socialism also concerned funding for medical treatment and medical aids. Almost 11,000 positive applications ensured eleven percent of 30 million euros.

By the middle of 2005, the six partner organizations of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund had received almost 20 million euros for more than 77,000 beneficiaries. That is 64.4 percent of the 30 million euros from the remaining capital of the Reconciliation Fund to which they were entitled for humanitarian projects and the associated administrative costs.

Emotional Reunion in Lviv

The approval of such projects once again underlined what had become clear while dealing with the individual and collective applications. The former forced laborers in the countries of Central and Central Eastern Europe needed the money above all to cover medical expenses. Moreover, thanks to these surpluses, former inmates of concentration camps on the territory of present-day Austria (for whose applications the German Foundation was responsible) now receive additional support from Austria. In their correspondence with these men and women, the partner organizations explicitly made reference to this fact. It should also be remembered that as part of the project carried out in cooperation with the Austrian Society for Orthopedic Medicine and Orthopedic Surgery, 31 former forced laborers from Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Russia were operated on in Austrian hospitals free of charge, some of them twice. Ambassador Richard Wotava, secretary general of the Reconciliation Fund, had a very special and emotional experience when he undertook his final visit to the Ukrainian partner organization in Lviv in April 2005, where operations and medical aids for hundreds of people had been approved for financing from the remaining capital of the Reconciliation Fund. In the last years of the war, his parents in Vienna had sent him to stay with friends on



A moving reunion after 60 years: Secretary General Wotava met his former playmate, the Ukrainian forced laborer Vassyl Popadjuk, in Lviv.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

a farm near St. Pölten, where he met and made friends with the Ukrainian forced laborer Vassyl Popadjuk, who was only three years older than he was. Vassyl had been deported at the age of thirteen with his siblings in 1942 to what is now Austria and had become separated from them here. Wotava had never forgotten his friendly playmate, who even after a heavy day's work was still in the mood to enjoy a fast game of soccer or fool around, and who could even put together a bicycle from scrap metal. Wotava searched for information about the Ukrainian in the archives until he finally tracked him down in the Ivano-Frankivsk area near Lviv, where he is now a carpenter. The ambassador was then able to meet his old friend and a number of his relatives in Lviv, a reunion that was movingly documented by newspapers, and on radio and television.

Grants for the Descendents of Forced Laborers

"Education" is the most important answer to the question of how the descendents at least of former forced laborers can best escape the vicious



cycle of poverty, misery and exploitation. Establishing a foundation with legal status under Austrian law to provide grants for such individuals therefore seemed to be a particularly meaningful form of action. The partner organizations were asked to help identify suitable candidates. Private individuals and companies are welcome to inject additional capital to supplement the approximately 25 million euros provided by the state. A specific appeal was made to the business community to make use of this opportunity and also to provide training places. The purpose of the foundation is to support education, further education and training measures at universities and also vocational further training institutions for the descendants of former forced laborers irrespective of their current nationality, in other words not only for citizens of partner countries, but also those of other states. These could later act as "ambassadors of reconciliation" in their old or adopted homes. The grants are to be financed from the interest earned on the Foundation endowment of 25 million euros and any additional private donations. This Foundation could therefore become a permanent institution for helping large numbers of young people whose ancestors were the victims of wrong. It is not necessarily the eternal curse of every evil deed "that propagating still, it brings forth evil" as Friedrich Schiller wrote echoing the words of the pre-Christian tragic poet Aeschylus. This is one case where horrific and evil deeds have in circuitous and labyrinthine ways also produced something good.

The Future Fund for Research and Remembrance

The Future Fund will be financed with some 20 million euros from the remaining capital of the Reconciliation Fund and will be established as a legal entity on the basis of an act of parliament to be passed for this purpose. The Foundation funds can also be increased by donations from private individuals and companies and other entities. The purpose of the Foundation is to conduct research into Nazi crimes, uphold the memory of the victims in order to prevent a repetition in new totalitarian systems, to promote tolerance and human rights and also to overcome discrimination, especially in Austria and in the partner countries. The Board of Trustees will be made up of respected personalities and will also include



members from countries other than Austria, but will not, however, include government representatives. Once the 20 million euros and the interest have been used up, the Fund will be dissolved. Each year, projects worth approximately one million euros will be sponsored.

Archives and documentation centers will be established to which scholars, but also victims of former totalitarian regimes will have easy access, but which will also respect the need for individual privacy. Plans have also been drawn up to organize exhibitions and commemorative events (with a relevance to the future whenever possible), for improved cooperation with museums and educational schemes, for civic education projects at schools and educational centers, but also for relevant social projects. When the Austrian Reconciliation Fund closes on December 31, 2005, the Future Fund will also administer any remaining capital that has not been claimed by partner organizations, or in some cases, by individuals.

The Board of Trustees of the Reconciliation Fund under its chairman Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel also made an important gesture of reconciliation with its decision to allocate 20 million euros from the Reconciliation Fund surplus (once legal peace had been achieved) to the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism "in understanding of the fact," as the minutes of the meeting said, "that the individual Austrian payments to victims of National Socialism on the grounds of Austria's moral responsibility can only be understood in an overall context." The General Settlement Fund was set up on the basis of an agreement reached in Washington in 2001 to compensate individuals for injury and losses that had never previously been decided by an Austrian court or authority, had been amicably settled or dismissed for lack of evidence if such proof were later to be found.

The Settlement Fund was endowed with 210 million dollars, but it will only be possible to determine how much an individual application will receive once all 18,000 (in many cases highly complex) applications have been processed. This painstaking preliminary work was one of the reasons why it has not yet been possible to start making payments from the General Settlement Fund. The crucial difference to the Reconciliation Fund is that payments to be made to former forced laborers were, in accordance with the German model, laid down in advance and could be disbursed the




day after legal peace had been achieved. The lack of legal peace was the second reason why the General Settlement Fund has been unable to commence disbursing money to date. However, the Austrian government also took a decisive step in the memorial year 2005 by implementing measures to accelerate the verification process and by reaching an agreement with the Jewish Community in Vienna (IKG) that would safeguard its survival in the long term. These resolutions, in the adoption of which the president of the Nationalrat, Andreas Khol, played a major role, did not fall within the Reconciliation Fund's jurisdiction. However, once the expected result has been achieved these steps should make a contribution to inner peace in much more than a legal sense.

Finally on December 20, 2004, the Board of Trustees of the Reconciliation Fund also decided to set aside a residual sum of no more than 5 million euros for problem areas that had not previously been dealt with adequately. In doing so, the trustees were thinking about unresolved issues that might possibly still arise from the final report of the Austrian Historians' Commission. While the commission released its final report and 52 sub-reports in a 49-volume work published by Oldenbourg Verlag, it will be some time before the analysis of the approximately 14,000 pages can be considered to have been completed. Proposals for the use of the remaining capital must be submitted to the Board of Trustees by December 1, 2005.

Interest More than Covered the Administrative Costs

A review of five years of financial management revealed something that had started to become apparent soon after the Austrian Reconciliation Fund commenced its work. The interest earned on the Fund's capital sufficed to cover all administrative expenses. Not a single euro of the capital provided for compensation payments to former slave and forced laborers was used for this purpose, and this is very much the achievement of all those involved with the Fund. The Austrian government and the provinces paid their contributions in full in 2001. Industry and a number of other institutions and individuals even paid slightly more than they had originally promised, thus increasing the expected income from interest.



Also in 2001, the 15 million dollars agreed with Stuart Eizenstat were paid to the Claims Conference, as were 75 million schillings (the Austrian currency at the time) or 5.4 million euros in fees to the lawyers. According to the auditors report, total administrative costs accounted for less than three-quarters of the interest income, so that a good 25 percent of the 27.9 million euros generated in interest was left for victims of National Socialism. The administrative expenses of the six partner organizations were also covered by the interest. Likewise all expenses for public relations work (publicizing the Reconciliation Fund throughout the world, this book, a brochure and a CD-ROM about the Fund's work) and all auditing costs were paid for from the interest. The sum of six billion schillings or 436 million euros allocated for symbolic compensation payments therefore remained untouched until the very last day of the Reconciliation Fund's work.

At the start of 2005, the Reconciliation Fund started to significantly reduce its personnel budget. Further reductions followed on July 1, 2005: The previous chief of staff Ulrike Dirisamer, now Mrs. Ulrike Renezeder, has after many years of valuable work resigned in order to move abroad. She has been succeeded as chief of staff by her deputy Jürgen Strasser, and he has been replaced as deputy by Georg Magerl, who was also already working for the Reconciliation Fund. The freelance contract with the Reconciliation Fund historian Hermann Rafetseder was also terminated, but the Fund was extremely grateful for his willingness to provide consulting services when needed. Finally, the number of students employed on part-time contracts and office expenses were also reduced. From the first to last day of its existence, the financial management of the Reconciliation Fund was continuously audited by Wirtschafts- und Steuerberatungsgesellschaft KPMG Alpen Treuhand GmbH in Vienna, which provided an unqualified certificate.

At the 11th and presumably penultimate meeting of the Board of Trustees under its chairman Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel on July 12, 2005, the Austrian and foreign trustees praised the efficient and economic management of the Reconciliation Fund. The chairman of the committee, Ludwig Steiner, and Secretary General Richard Wotava received demonstrative applause for their reports. The representative of the Russian organization even declared that Chancellor Schüssel deserved a Nobel Peace Prize for



his initiative, to which the Chancellor responded that it had never been the work of any single individual but always the joint and extensive efforts of the entire team that had ensured the project's success. The Board of Trustees also expressed the desire that the legislation required to reallocate the remaining Fund capital should be passed unanimously by both the governing and opposition parties like all previous laws. At this meeting at the Federal Chancellery, the leading representatives of the Fund also urgently appealed to the partner organizations to send the invoice documents for humanitarian projects that had already been approved and financed by advance payments to the Reconciliation Fund office as soon as possible. At this point in time, a number of countries were clearly behind schedule.

All the trustees backed a suggestion put forward by the Chancellor to extend the deadline for the submission of further projects to be financed by the very last remaining capital from October 1 to December 1, 2005, and to use the sum of 1.1 million euros to expand existing projects for Austrian Roma and Sinti. The two main areas of emphasis will be on youth training and identifying by name all members of this ethnic group who were murdered during the Third Reich.

Learning from History—and Hoping!

The arguments put forward by Professor Rudolf Burger that violent historical events need to be forgotten if they are to be prevented from reoccurring in the present and the future have caused something of a stir in contemporary Austrian philosophy circles. In his *Kleine Geschichte der Vergangenheit* [Brief History of the Past], Burger admits to being highly skeptical about supposedly objective historiography and opposes the slogan "Never Forget" which, he says, rests over the peoples of Europe "like a biblical curse." If the Serbs had finally been able to forget the disastrous battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, then perhaps Srebrenica could have been avoided in 1995! "Perpetuating the memory of large-scale crimes has never prevented consequential crimes, on the contrary it has often called them forth and legitimized them" (20 f.). There might be something to be



Václav Havel (left) with Chancellor Schüssel: Hope is the certainty that something has meaning.

Source: Hopi-Media/Bernhard J. Holzner

said for Burger's view if one started from the assumption that the shared consciousness of a people or a generation cannot develop in a positive manner and that each memory produces no other thought than the question, "how can we best avenge the wrongs of the past?"

However, after 1945, the peoples of Western and Central Europe who had the opportunity to reflect on the past in peace and liberty did not cultivate a desire for revenge after the horrific events of the immediate past. Instead, they created a model, namely the European Union, that promises the survival of Europe in democratic self-determination. In and after decades that saw the ignominious revival of totalitarian systems, the countries of East and South East Europe have also recognized the attractiveness of this model and have acceded to it. Europe in the 21st century is on the way to a future in which salutary lessons have been drawn, not by forgetting the past, but by studying it. Violence is not overcome by counter violence, but by tolerance exercised in liberty. The human dignity of one person is not protected by violating the human dignity of another, but only by the unreserved recognition of a human dignity that appertains to everyone. If



The scholarly archives of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund: each case represents a tragic fate.

Source: Austrian Reconciliation Fund

this insight is to have any power in history, it must be expressed not only in words, but also in deeds. With the creation of the Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Cooperation, the Republic of Austria has deliberately and voluntarily made an attempt to do justice to this need. Not without effect, as we confidently hope. And hope, as Václav Hável told us many years ago, is "not the conviction that something will end well, but the certainty that something, however it ends, has meaning."



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NÖSDESGESETZBLATT

FÜR DIE REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH

2009

Augusmonat am 8. August 2009

Teil I

Österreichische Verfassungsgesetze
(NR. 12)

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Payments made as of July 12, 2005

Amounts Disbursed to Victims

	Total number of applications	Employed in agriculture	Employed in industry	Slave laborers (concentration camp-like conditions)	Addition payments made to mothers	Total in euros
Individual applications according to country or continent						
Bosnia and Herzegovina	631	37	560	34	11	1,741,605.10
Germany	1,011	82	526	403	4	4,533,696.41
France	6,447	146	5,982	319	20	17,869,165.81
Greece	434	7	345	82	9	1,516,682.51
United Kingdom	975	465	437	73	36	2,357,508.69
Israel	3,095	5	1,370	1,720	5	16,618,465.60
Italy	638	31	568	39	3	1,788,479.09
Canada	1,000	383	346	271	24	3,513,370.28
Croatia	1,912	237	1,574	101	34	5,131,067.64
Netherlands	590	14	560	16	1	1,567,190.20
Austria	1,779	441	864	474	61	6,477,696.21
Serbia and Montenegro	2,475	98	2,218	159	29	7,007,843.56
Slovakia	458	62	378	18	7	1,191,471.65
Slovenia	2,395	868	1,447	80	27	5,562,382.88
USA	3,290	343	1,857	1,090	50	13,557,485.66
Other European states	1,155	158	799	198	24	3,781,532.49
Australia	635	191	321	123	16	2,038,474.12
Latin America	550	138	331	81	26	1,670,022.57
Africa	12	3	8	1		32,339.43
Asia	11	2	8			30,885.97
TOTAL	29,493	3,711	20,499	5,283	387	97,987,365.87

Applications received through partner organizations

Belarus	4,347	1,631	2,708	8	5	9,666,150.12
Poland	22,693	1,6372	6,197	124	379	42,681,501.86
Russia	12,708	5,123	7,551	34	57	27,921,177.35
Czech Republic	10,946	247	10,436	263	34	30,234,655.99
Ukraine	42,661	22,804	19,637	220	541	87,966,666.71
Hungary	8,730	53	5,619	3,058	3	37,932,968.98
TOTAL	102,085	46,230	52,148	3,707	1,019	237,593,153.14

Lump sum payment to the Claims Conference

						16,370,226.07
TOTAL	131,578	49,938	72,652	8,988	1,406	351,950,745.08

Contributions	Total in euros
Austrian government	268,889,000
Industry	133,750,000
Other public bodies	36,337,000
Other	278,000
TOTAL	439,254,000
Interest (as of 5/31/2005)	27,767,000
TOTAL	467,021,000

Individual applications were submitted directly to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund and were also processed by the Fund. Applications submitted through the six partner organizations were processed by them and then verified and approved by the Reconciliation Fund.

**Federal Law - Concerning the Fund for Voluntary Payments
by the Republic of Austria to Former Slave Laborers and Forced Lab-
orers of the National Socialist Regime
(Reconciliation Fund Law)**

Section 1.

(1) This federal law establishes a Fund for providing payments to former slave laborers and forced laborers of the Nazi regime on the territory of present day Austria. It bears the name „Fund for Reconciliation, Peace, and Cooperation (Reconciliation Fund).“ The Fund has its headquarters in Vienna.

(2) The goal of the Fund is to make a contribution toward reconciliation, peace, and cooperation through a voluntary gesture of the Republic of Austria to natural persons who were coerced into slave labor or forced labor by the National Socialist regime on the territory of the present day Republic of Austria.

(3) The Fund is an organ of the Republic of Austria, is subject to Austrian law, has the character of a legal person, and serves public or charitable purposes only.

Section 2.

(1) The Fund makes one-time payments to natural persons who under the Nazi regime

1. were transported by force or by deception into work on the territory of the present day Republic of Austria, or who after a voluntary stay on the territory of present day Republic of Austria were prevented from returning home, were forced to work here, were subjected to particularly bad living conditions and either

a) were subject to confinement or some other significant limitation of freedom, or
b) were deprived of their personal rights or subjected to particularly severe disciplinary measures (forced laborers or forced labor, as the case may be); or

2. were forced while under detention to do slave labor in a concentration camp or in

a similar place of confinement under inhumane conditions on the present day territory of the Republic of Austria (slave laborers or slave labor, as the case may be); or

3. suffered demonstrably severe and lasting physical or psychological damage due to work they had to do under conditions cited in the introductory sentence of Number 1 (special hardship cases); or

4. were transported as children or as minors under the age of 12 with one or both parents (as described in Numbers 1 through 3 of this Section) into the territory of the present day Republic of Austria or who were born here during the mother's period of forced labor.

(2) In addition, the Fund will make one-time financial payments to natural persons who without fulfilling the conditions of the introductory sentence of Section 1, Number 1 but because of political motives, reasons of ancestry, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, physical or mental handicap, accusation of supposed anti-social behavior or in connection with medical experiments were coerced by the National Socialist regime to work on the territory of present day Austria under conditions equivalent to those cited in Paragraph 1, Numbers 1 a) or b).

(3) Payments are not to be made to former prisoners of war.

Section 3.

(1) The amounts to be paid are as follows:

1. 105,000 Austrian shillings to persons described in Section 2, Paragraph 1, Number 2 (slave laborers).

2. 35,000 Austrian shillings to persons described in Section 2, Paragraph 1 and Paragraph 2 (forced laborers) who had to perform forced labor in industry, busi-

ness, construction, power companies and other commercial enterprises, public institutions, rail transportation or postal service.

3. 20,000 Austrian shillings to persons described in Section 2, Paragraph 1, Number 1 and Paragraph 2 (forced laborers) who had to do forced labor exclusively in agriculture or forestry or in the form of personal services (housekeeping, hotel work, etc.).

4. Children and minors as described in Section 2, Paragraph 1, Number 4 are to receive the amount to which the parent is entitled or would be entitled. In the case of a deportation with both parents each of whom is or would be entitled to a different amount, the larger amount is applicable in each case.

5. A supplementary payment of 5000 Austrian shillings may be made to women who during their time as forced laborers gave birth to children in maternity facilities for eastern workers or who were forced to undergo abortions.

(2) The hardship cases mentioned in Section 2, Paragraph 1, Number 3 may receive payments up to the amount applicable to their categories (Paragraph 1, Number 2 or 3).

(3) Persons who meet the conditions for several categories are to receive the highest amount applicable.

Section 4.

(1) Articles 21 and 26 of the State Treaty restoring an independent and democratic Austria, Federal Legislative Record No. 152/1955, are not affected by this federal law; this federal law does not confer a legal right to payment.

(2) Payments under this federal law are strictly personal and must be applied for as such. They are not to be given or taken as security for a loan. They can be allowed only if the petitioner through documentation or otherwise makes a credible claim to fulfillment of the conditions. If the eli-

gible person has died on or after February 15, 2000, then the heirs according to the national law of the person in question shall succeed.

(3) The only applications that can be considered are those received within two years from the effective date of this federal law by the responsible partner organizations or, in the case of persons for whom there is no partner organization, directly by the Fund. The Board of Trustees is permitted to extend the deadline by a maximum of one year. Applications that are to be submitted directly to the Fund can also be brought together and processed by organizations that while not listed among the partner organizations cited in Section 7, Paragraph 4 do represent the interests of persons cited in Section 2. In such cases the payments will be made by the Fund directly to the eligible persons.

(4) Contributions to the Fund are to be free of all federally-imposed deductions.

(5) Persons who could receive payments under Section 2, Paragraph 1, Number 2 from the foundation „Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future“ of the Federal Republic of Germany are ineligible for payments under this federal legislation. Persons described in Section 2, Paragraph 1, Number 1 may receive payments under this law only if the majority of their forced labor took place on the territory of present day Austria. The Austrian Fund, therefore, is to take the necessary steps so that applications received by the Fund for whose processing it is not responsible can be accepted and transmitted directly to the processing center of the foundation „Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future.“ On the other hand, it must be assured that in the case of payments to forced laborers there not be duplicate payments from the Foundation and the Fund.

Section 5.

(1) Payment of an award is made under the condition that the recipient make a declaration that with the receipt of an award under this federal law he renounces irrevocably

any claim for slave labor or forced labor against the Republic of Austria or against Austrian business. The Fund is to assure that slave laborers and forced laborers covered under Section 2, Paragraph 1, Numbers 2 or 1 who receive payments from the „Remembrance, Responsibility and Future“ Foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany also make an irrevocable renunciation of any claims for slave labor and forced labor against the Republic of Austria and Austrian business enterprises. Likewise, slave laborers and forced laborers who receive payments under Section 2, Paragraph 1, Number 2 or 1 of this federal law must in their declaration to the Fund also renounce irrevocably any claims for slave labor or forced labor against the Federal Republic of Germany and German business enterprises.

(2) Austrian business enterprises for the purposes of this legislation are defined as all business enterprises that had or now have their headquarters on the territory of the present day Republic of Austria, as well as their parent companies even if they had or now have their headquarters in another country. In addition, Austrian business enterprises are those business enterprises located outside the territory of the present day Republic of Austria in which Austrian business enterprises as defined in Sentence 1 had or now have either directly or indirectly an ownership share of at least 25 per cent.

Section 6.

(1) The Fund shall have moneys in the amount of 6 billion Austrian shillings to carry out its tasks. This amount will consist of:

1. contributions of the federal government according to the federal financial legislation applicable at that time,
2. contributions of other regional bodies,
3. contributions from all areas of business and industry, and
4. other contributions.

(2) With the overall total cited in Paragraph 1, the Fund is fully capitalized. There is no obligation to make a supplementary payment.

(3) Contributions to the Fund are not subject to the inheritance tax nor the gift tax nor to any similar financial impositions having the same purpose or effect.

Section 7.

(1) The awarding of a payment under Section 3 to persons named in Section 2, Paragraphs 1 and 2 is to be made either through the partner organizations named in Paragraph 4 with whose governments pertinent bilateral agreements exist or directly by the Fund in cases where persons are not covered by the partner organizations named in Paragraph 4.

(2) Payments by the Fund are to be made according to administrative principles governing private enterprise.

(3) In Austria, payments by the Fund or the partner organizations are not subject to inheritance tax nor gift tax, and the recipient of a payment is not subject to income tax nor capital gains tax.

(4) The partner organizations are:

- the foundation „Understanding and Reconciliation“ in the Republic of Belarus;
- the foundation „German-Polish Reconciliation“ in the Republic of Poland;
- the foundation „Understanding and Reconciliation“ in the Russian Federation;
- the „Czech Council for the Victims of National Socialism“ in the Czech Republic;
- the National Foundation „Understanding and Reconciliation“ in Ukraine;
- the foundation „Jewish Legacy in Hungary“ in the Republic of Hungary.

(5) Within two months after this federal law comes into effect, the Fund in cooperation with the partner organizations is to give appropriate worldwide publicity to the payments made possible under this federal law. Specifically, this publicity is to contain information about the Fund and the partner organizations, the conditions that need to be fulfilled for awards, application deadlines, and information about the data verification that will be needed in this regard.

(6) Additional provisions for the award of payments will be laid out in the guidelines of the Fund and are to be addressed in the contracts to be concluded between the Fund and the partner organizations (Section 8, Paragraph 2).

Section 8.

(1) Moneys of the Fund will be transferred in the shortest possible time to the partner organizations according to actual need on the basis of lists, which are submitted by each partner organization and spot checked by the responsible organ of the Fund, of persons who according to Section 2, Paragraph 1 were permanent residents on February 15, 2000, of countries named in the bilateral agreements according to Section 7, Paragraph 1, and will also be given to cover appropriate personnel and material expenses of the partner organizations, including the cost of publicity stipulated in Section 7, Paragraph 5. Care must be taken in this respect that the Austrian origin of the money and its purpose be emphasized appropriately to the eligible recipients and to the public in the countries affected.

(2) It is intended that agreements be reached with the governments of countries named in Section 12, Paragraph 1, Number 8 stating that these countries will not assert nor advocate or support further claims against the Republic of Austria or against Austrian business enterprises in the category of past slave labor or forced labor. The modalities for making payments will be established through agreements with the countries named in Section 7 as well as through contracts between the Fund and the partner organizations. In so far as partner organizations according to Article 7, Paragraph 4, are established in particular countries, then bilateral agreements should provide that:

1. eligibility for financial awards is to be established through appropriate documentation or other appropriate means,
2. persons whose complete and already examined files concerning the slave labor or forced labor done by them are already in the possession of the partner organization do not have to submit new applications for

payment,

3. representatives of the Fund or persons commissioned by the Fund are to be permitted to exercise oversight or otherwise cooperate with regard to work of the partner organizations in so far as this would be related to the implementation of this federal legislation, and

4. financial payments are to be made without any deductions and, in particular, they are not to lead to any reduction of payments made under the social security and health insurance systems.

5. financial payments are to be made only upon submission of the declaration stipulated in Section 5, Paragraph 1 and that this declaration is to be forwarded to the Fund.

(3) In the interest of greatest possible transparency, a periodic international business audit is to be conducted at each of the partner organizations, the cost of which is to be paid by the Fund; the selection of the auditing organization is to be made by agreement between each partner organization and the Fund. The decision on the international business audit of the Fund will be made by the Board of Trustees.

Section 9.

(1) The Fund and the partner organizations are authorized to receive information necessary for carrying out its work from government agencies and other public institutions. Information may be withheld only when its transmission would be contrary to specific legal regulations or if the protection of individual privacy outweighs the legitimate desire of the Fund to have the information.

(2) The information received may be used only for carrying out the purposes of this federal law and the personal data of a claimant may be used only for the determination of payments. The use of these data for other purposes is only permitted if the claimant gives explicit permission.

Section 10.

(1) The organs of the Fund are the Board of Trustees (Section 11), the Committee (Section 13) and the Secretary General (Section 14).

(2) The public representative of the Fund is to be the chairperson of the Board of Trustees.

Section 11.

(1) The Board of Trustees is the highest organ of the Fund. It has particular responsibility for the following:

1. Release and publication of the Fund's standard operating procedures.
2. Release of Fund guidelines for making monetary awards.
3. Appointment of the members of the Committee.
4. Decision making on financial procedures.
5. The determination of which awards are to be decided upon by the Committee.
6. The determination of awards that are not transferred to the responsibility of the Committee.
7. Decision-making on the disposition of the Fund's capital assets.
8. Control over the purposeful expenditure of the Fund's capital assets.
9. Commissioning and implementing a periodical international business audit.
10. Approval of account balance statements.
11. Decision-making for the semi-annual report to the Federal Government.

(2) The Federal Government is to present promptly the report stipulated in Paragraph 1, Number 11 to the Principal Committee of the National Council and see to it that it is published.

Section 12. (Constitutional Provision)

(1) The Board of Trustees consists of the following:

1. the Federal Chancellor, the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Federal Minister of Finance, the Federal Minister for

Business and Labor, or a representative of one or more of these offices,

2. a member to be sent by each of the parties represented in the National Council,
3. a member to be sent by the Conference of State Governors,
4. three business representatives to be sent by the working group called „Humanitarian Action Platform,“
5. a representative of the Austrian Working Group of Concentration Camp Associations and Resistance Fighters,
6. the Head of the Documentation Center of the Alliance of Jewish Victims of Persecution or his representative,
7. the Head of the Cultural Association of Austrian Roma Peoples or his representative,
8. One representative each of the governments of the Republic of Belarus, the Polish Republic, the Russian Federation, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, the Republic of Hungary, and the United States of America to the extent that these countries choose to send representatives.
9. an attorney to be sent by the government of the United States of America.

(2) The chairperson of the Board of Trustees is the Federal Chancellor. On the recommendation of the chairperson, the Board of Trustees will elect a deputy chairperson, whose deputy in turn will be the person among the remaining members named in Paragraph 1, Line 1 above who is the oldest. The Board of Trustees will make its decisions on the basis of simple majority, provided that a quorum of at least half the members is present. In case of a tie, the vote will be decided by the chairperson or by the person who is serving in his place.

(3) The Board of Trustees may decide for individual agenda items to hear testimony of representatives of persons designated in Section 2, Paragraph 1 and 2, or of other persons having information.

(4) Work on the Board of Trustees will be carried out on a „pro bono“ basis; necessary expenses will be reimbursed by the Fund.



Section 13.

(1) Members of the Committee are the chairperson of the Board of Trustees or a substitute named by him as chairperson, an additional member named by the Board of Trustees as deputy chairperson, as well as three additional members named by the Board of Trustees.

(2) The Committee decides according to its competencies under Section 11, Number 5 on the awarding of payments.

(3) The Committee makes decisions about the spot checking of the lists of persons submitted by the partner organizations in keeping with Section 2, Paragraph 1 and about appropriate measures to be based on this spot checking.

(4) The chairperson of the Committee or his deputy is to report to each meeting of the Board of Trustees on decisions made by the Committee since its previous meeting.

Section 14.

(1) The Secretary General supports the chairperson of the Board of Trustees in the administration of the Fund and prepares the factual documents and the decision documents of the Board of Trustees and of the Committee.

(2) The Secretary General is to be appointed by the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the chairperson.

Section 15.

(1) Earnings on the capital fund and other income are to be used only in support of the goals of the Fund. This includes personnel and material expenditures.

(2) The Fund is to be established for a period of three years. At the end of that time, the Board of Trustees may decide to spend the remaining capital of the Fund for payments in connection with wrongs that had taken place on the territory of the present day Republic of Austria during the time of the National Socialist regime whereby particular consideration is to be given to the heirs of those slave laborers and forced laborers who died before the deadline (Section 3, Paragraph 2).

Section 16.

In so far as is relevant, any expressions in this federal law pertaining to persons pertain equally to women and to men.

Section 17. (Constitutional Provision)

This federal law will take effect as soon as it has been confirmed that all of the funds referred to in Section 6 are available and that the agreements with countries in which partner organizations according to Section 7, Paragraph 4 have been established and the agreement with the United States have been signed. The federal government will publish the effective date of this federal law in Volume I of the Federal Legislative Record.

Section 18.

The following are charged with the implementation of this federal law:
the Federal Minister of Finance with regard to Section 4, Paragraph 4;
Section 6, Paragraph 3; and Section 7, Paragraph 3;
2. the relevant federal minister for any matters covered in Section 12 that touch on his responsibilities;
3. the Federal Government for all remaining provisions.

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