

VIENNA: "A Letter to the Stars"- Remembering the Holocaust

"A Letter to the Stars" is the largest Holocaust education project in Austria. To date, more than 40,000 high school students have participated, many of them researching the histories and experiences of Austrian victims and survivors of the Holocaust. These students have chosen to participate in this "38-08" project to find meaningful ways to commemorate the Holocaust.

My wife and I were part of a group of about 200 ex-Austrian survivors from the UK, USA, Israel, South America, Australia and Sweden who were invited to come together with their partners to Vienna for one week to tell their experiences during the Nazi period to pupils in various schools throughout Austria.

As we arrived on the 1st May at the Vienna Airport, we were received by the members of the "A Letter to the Stars" organization. We were each given a Nametag attached on a red ribbon which we put around our neck. Each Survivor was given his special "Minder". Our's was Katya Seidel, a lovely young lady about 27 years old. A bus was taking us to the 4 star Schoenbrunn Park Hotel.

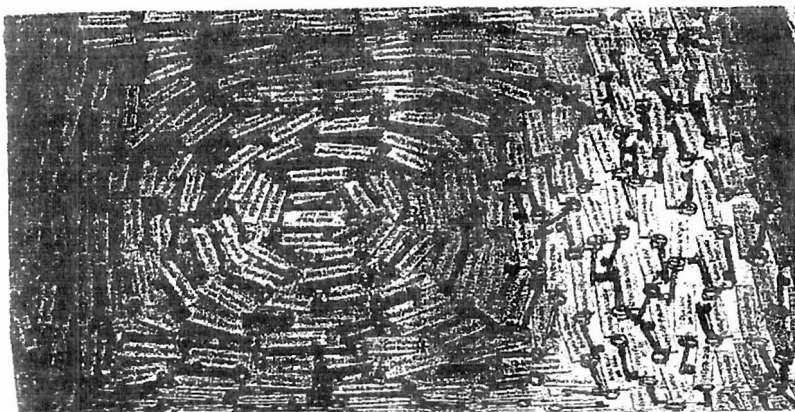
In the evening of our day of arrival we were all invited to a Gala reception at the beautiful Ball room of our Hotel. The Secretary of State Dr. Hand Winkler welcomed us, there was Music by the Vienna Harmonists. We then had a most wonderful Buffet Dinner for all tastes. Meat, Fish, Salads, vegetarian and even a kosher section. We met the survivors of the different countries

On Friday 2 May we visited a the wonderful Albertina Museum where we saw paintings by Picasso, Monet and other Impressionist painters.

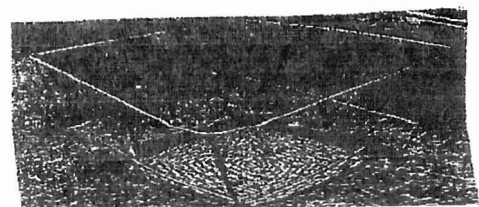
In the evening we were invited to Friday night prayers in the Seitenstaettengasse Synagogue, followed by a fantastic dinner at a kosher restaurant called Alef Alef, which was very near to the Synagogue. We had a wonderful meal and we all sang Hebrew and Yiddish songs.

Saturday 3 May we were able to visit the shops in the Center of Vienna where we got rid of some of our Euros

The next day Sunday 4th May, a bus collected those who wanted to visit the "Stationen der Erinnerung in Alsergrund" – The Stations of Remembrance in the 9th District of Vienna. We assembled in front of the Serviten gasse Church and were shown the "Schlüssel gegen das Vergessen"- The Keys against Forgetting. 462 keys each one with the name of a Jew who lived in the Serviten Gasse was displayed in a glass show window sunken in the ground of the pavement.



Schlüssel gegen das Vergesse

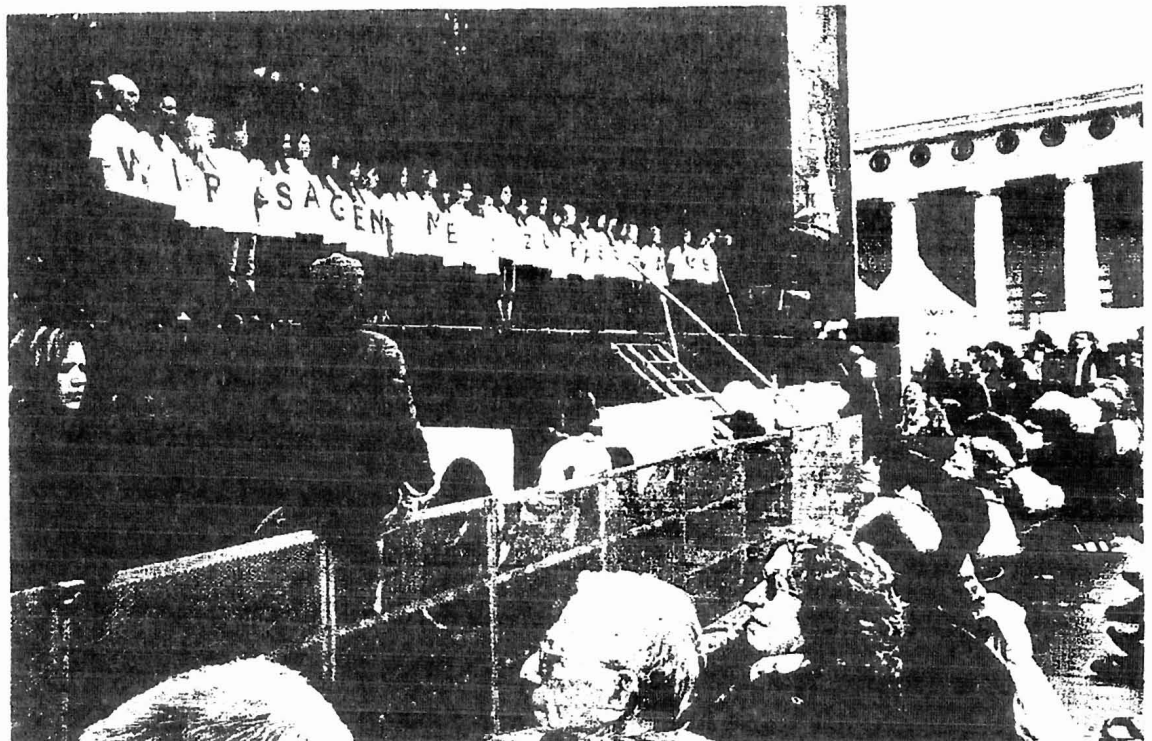


In some other parts of the 9th district we were shown Brass plates in front of certain buildings with names of Jews who lived in these buildings. These plates were placed on the pavement, because the owners of the property did not want the plates placed on their building.

| HIER WOHNTE | |
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| REGINA ROSENZWEIG GEB. ZEISEL 20.4.1888 DEPORTIERT 1941 NACH LODZ | NATHAN GUTTMANN 3.11.1879 ERMORDET 1942 IN SOBIBOR |
| SOPHIE GUTTMANN 21.4.1884 ERMORDET 1942 IN SOBIBOR | HILDA GUTTMANN 10.1.1911 ERMORDET 1942 IN SOBIBOR |

Monday May 5 morning we were invited to the special convening of Parliament for Austria's national commemorative day "Against Violence and Racism and in Memory of the Victims of National Socialism". The program was broadcast live on national television. The theme was "children's suffering" and included an art instillation of the names of child victims, the reading of biographies". Speeches by the President of Austria and other members of the Government also speeches from some of the Survivors.

We then marched from the Parliament to the Helden Platz (The Square of Heros) where we were taken to the reserved seats. As we entered the square we were greeted by 4.000 students who came to this Ceremony from all over Austria. They applauded us with loud cheers. There was a very large stage where survivors and members of the organization spoke. At one time 27 Children lined up on the stage, each one with a white tee shirt on it was one letter. When they lined up the wording on the tee shirt read "WIR SAGEN NEIN ZU RASSISMUS" – We say NO to racism. It was very emotional especially when the 4000 children cheered this display.



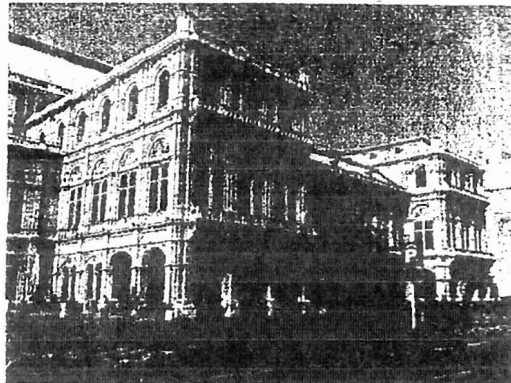
On every tree of the square a personalized Biography of each survivor was displayed. Some in German and some in English. My Biography looked like this.



On the 6th May I was taken by car to my first lecture at the Rahl Gasse High School in the 6th District where I lectured to a history Class of about 35 students. They knew quite a lot about the Holocaust, but after my lecture so many questions were asked. I felt they wanted to know more and more about this tragic period,

May 7th in the morning my wife accompanied me to a Fashion School in the Herbststrasse, I lectured to a very large audience of over 100 students who received my lecture with great enthusiasm. Again so many questions were asked and I had a feeling that they were very much aware of their grandfather's Nazi participation during the Nazi period in Austria.

In the evening Freda and I went to the Opera where we saw Mozart's Magic Flute performance. We enjoyed this very much.



On the 8th May we returned to our home in London