

# LEGACY

## Preamble

We, the prisoners liberated from Mauthausen, are hearing people today, mainly youths, who chant slogans that we have heard before.

We, the prisoners liberated from Mauthausen, are seeing people today, who wear badges and medals that we have seen before.

We, the prisoners liberated from Mauthausen, are hearing politicians ramble about glory and loyalty, which we have heard before.

But as long as we are able, we will keep talking about the horrors we had to experience in Mauthausen.

As long as we are able, we will keep talking about the orders we were forced to follow.

As long as we are able, we will keep talking about the crimes to which we became witnesses.

And as long as we are able, we will speak about who did this to us, and most of all why.

As long as we are able, we will fight so what happened to us will never happen again to anyone.

National Socialism and war have caused horrible things in Europe: The murder of millions, the “Extermination through labour” of thousands, the abuse of idealism and cynical excess. The damage done to countless people in the international community through fascism and nationalist hate speech, has left traces still visible today.

The liberated prisoners have declared on 16 May 1945 the intangible values of camp solidarity and of the European resistance against fascism in the “Mauthausen oath”, in which it says:

*“.. The permanence in the camp, lasting years, has reinforced in our minds the knowledge of the value of brotherhood among the people of all nations.”*

The former prisoners have been fulfilling this legacy for decades, by choosing the shared path of indivisible freedom, national respect, and cooperation, in remembrance of the Austrian and European resistance.

Worried about the future, we, the prisoners liberated from Mauthausen are addressing to future generations the following

## **LEGACY**

### **1. Remembrance for the future**

The former concentration camp of Mauthausen is a silent, stony testimony of its time. Due to its special location and outer appearance, but mainly due to its horrific past, it is an admonition for posterity. The same applies to the satellite camps of Mauthausen concentration camp.

But Mauthausen shall not only serve as a memorial to the common fight of the prisoners from many countries and nations against terror and barbarity and suffering, it shall also help to accept one's own past. Austrian history is largely marked by German nationalism and anti-Semitism. To this day, some people in Austria still feel resentment towards others who are “different”. Only by making oneself consistently aware of the past of this country can one help avoid wrong developments in the future.

*Those without memory have no future. Those who do not know the past will not be able to shape the future.*

The numerous events, such as the annual liberation ceremonies, the commemorations and youth events, the guided tours for students and the keen participation of many people of all ages and from all parts of the world make us hopeful and point the way to a more peaceful future. We must continue along this path with patience and consistent steps in the right direction.

## **2. Mauthausen Aktiv Österreich as successor organisation:**

The Austrian Association of Mauthausen Survivors has effected the creation of its successor organisation, Mauthausen Aktiv Österreich, and proudly points out that this association was founded by the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions and the Bishops Conference of the Roman-catholic church in 1997. The Federation of Jewish Communities is also actively involved, as are representatives of other denominations and renowned personalities of public life, as well as numerous activist groups and associations for locations of satellite camps.

This association is considered the successor organisation to the Austrian Association of Mauthausen Survivors by the former prisoners.

The decade-long work of the Austrian Association of Mauthausen Survivors gives a clear mandate to Mauthausen Aktiv Österreich,

- to preserve the anti-fascist memory of Mauthausen on a nonpartisan basis,
- to link remembrance with decisive activity against national and religious intolerance, against racial hatred and right-wing extremism,
- to make sure that no more major events are held in the quarry "Wiener Graben",
- to focus on contemporary research, to encourage artistic examination of the topic and to provide forms of cultural participation for young people,
- to turn Mauthausen into a meeting place for European youths by creating an educational institution with a central archive and library.

### **3. Former Mauthausen Concentration Camp and satellite camps as places of remembrance:**

Mauthausen Concentration Camp and the remains of its satellite camps must be preserved as memorial sites; but they must not only be administrated, but also equipped according to the concepts and proposals provided by the Austrian Association of Mauthausen Survivors in their memorandum.

The existing objects and items in the Stalag as well as in the subcamps must not be structurally altered and should be preserved.

Many things in the former Concentration Camp Mauthausen are still preserved in their original state, many buildings and building parts were removed, and some were changed. In Mauthausen as well as in the subcamps of Gusen, Melk, Ebensee etc. it is therefore necessary to take precise written and visual inventory of all existing buildings, walls, items, etc. and to closely involve the former prisoners, in order to record and document what has remained in its original state and where changes have been made. A special focus must be placed on the gas chamber - it is the only gas chamber built by the Nazis that is still preserved.

In the area of the main camp (Stalag), there were several barracks and tents: SS quarters, warehouses, the seat of the political department, the armoury, and different labour battalions. In the "Wiener Graben" quarry, there were barracks for stonemasons and for armament: train tracks for a narrow-gauge railway led to the Danube port and to Gusen. This should be recorded accordingly in the topographical representations. The relevant sites should also have signs in multiple languages describing and explaining the different objects, areas, or locations.

The camp outline of Mauthausen concentration camp should remain structurally unaltered and maintain its current form. To make the memorial more visible from afar, lighting should be installed (on towers, walls) and activated on days of important events (liberation ceremonies, national holiday etc.).

#### **4. Museum:**

When redesigning the museum, the nature of the European resistance must be clearly reflected in the changes. New technology (i.e. Electronic media) must be installed and updated, the internationality of the victims and visitors must be apparent in explanations and literature etc. in multiple languages.

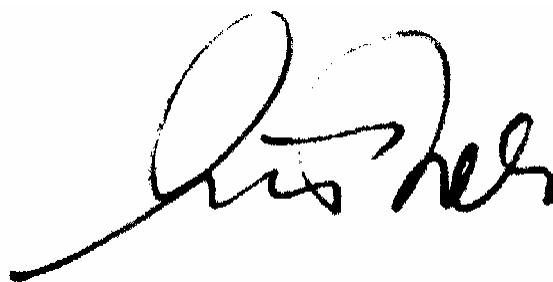
#### **5. Hosting visitors:**

Encouraging students of all schools, apprentices, and youth organisations to visit the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial should be a core focus. Smooth logistical organisation and pedagogical and educational support must be provided.

#### **6. Appeal to the Republic of Austria:**

We appeal to the Republic of Austria to recognise its obligation towards democratic education and to provide the necessary means for the implementation of this educational work at the memorial sites, independent of day-to-day political developments.

The former prisoners of Mauthausen

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hans Maršálek', written in a cursive style.

Hans Maršálek  
Chairman of the Austrian Association of Mauthausen Survivors

Vienna, December 2000