

## Autobiographical recollections

The National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism believes that the preparation, documentation, publication and dissemination of the life stories of the victims of National Socialism is a vital contribution towards efforts to come to terms with recent Austrian history. Put to paper, these autobiographical recollections of Holocaust survivors are an important resource for historical researchers and also make a significant contribution towards helping subsequent generations develop a critical awareness. Beyond this, the authentic testimonies of the victims add another more personal and tangible dimension to history.

Public interest in the personal fates of people who fell victim to the Nazi regime for many different reasons was late to surface in Austria. For a long time it was limited to specific groups of victims. Given that the number of people who can describe these events first-hand is steadily declining, it is now more important than ever to preserve and pass on their memories and knowledge.

The National Fund has appreciated this since the outset and has been constant in its efforts to make these valuable testimonies accessible to an interested public.

The National Fund first published Holocaust survivors' life stories to mark its 5th anniversary in 2000, in a small volume titled "In die Tiefe geblickt". For the 10th anniversary of the National Fund, more victims' stories were published as part of the publication marking the occasion, "A Closer Look and Future Prospects".

In the Year of Remembrance 2008, 70 years after the "Anschluss" of Austria to the German Reich, the National Fund, inspired by the Day of Remembrance against Violence and Racism held at the Parliament by former President of the National Council Barbara Prammer under the title "Never a Child", also began to use its website to publish life stories. Since then, this online collection of memories has been continually extended and has become quite a remarkable collection.

In 2010, a two-volume publication was brought out to mark the National Fund's 15th anniversary. One of these volumes was dedicated exclusively to life stories of the victims. This volume planted the seed for the series which was started one year later, "Erinnerungen" ("Lives Remembered"). Copies of the series "Lives Remembered" can be ordered from the National Fund and are provided free of charge to Austrian schools for use in class and school libraries.

By publishing and distributing these valuable testimonials, the National Fund hopes to be making a contribution towards Austria's collective memory, preserving them for future generations not only as a warning but also as a sign of hope. As such, these personal memories and narratives of many thousands of people, which were entrusted to the National Fund when filing their applications, are a historical and social treasure of immeasurable value.