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Austrian National Fund presents a series of books containing the life stories of the Victims of National Socialism

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On 7 March 2013, the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism will present the second volume of the series "Lives Remembered. Life Stories of Victims of National Socialism" with a reading of autobiographical texts followed by a discussion with contemporary eyewitnesses moderated by Dr. Andrea Schurian at the psychosocial center ESRA.

Over 366 pages, the recently published volume unites 30 autobiographical testimonies of National Socialist persecutees from different groups of victims and an academic essay by Dr. Gerhard Botz on their historical background. The main target groups for this volume are school and university students in Austria.

Autobiographical extracts will be read by: Erika Nemschitz, who as child of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother survived the Holocaust in Vienna. Johannes Maierhofer, whose mother, a Jehovah's Witness, survived the "Children's Sanatorium Am Spiegelgrund". Dr. Lucia Heilman, who, as a Jew, was no longer able to escape Vienna and lived with her mother as a "U-Boot" hidden by a friend. Cristina Budroni, whose mother experienced exclusion and persecution first hand as the daughter of a political persecutee, and Dr. Katja Sturm-Schnabl, who was deported with her family to several camps during the course of the enforced resettlement of the Carinthian Slovenes. The accordion duo Gertrude Kisser and Professor Felix Lee will provide the event with a musical framework.

"It is of special importance to the National Fund that the autobiographical memories of survivors of the Holocaust and of persecution be made accessible to the public and remain as points of reference", explained Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund. "The variety and the unstudied multifaceted nature of the life stories assembled in this volume is illuminating; they allow interesting insights; they touch us; they make us angry and they make us think", stated the editor of the series and Deputy Secretary General of the National Fund, Dr. Renate Meissner. The life stories published in the present volume are "part of our history and our identity and bridge the gap between our past and our present", she added.

Volume 2 of "Lives Remembered" focuses on the year 1942, in which the so called "final solution to the Jewish question" – the extermination of European Jewry, which was already in progress – was resolved at the Wannsee Conference. For Gerhard Botz, Professor Emeritus of the Institute of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna, the great value of memories of contemporary witnesses "lies in the impression they are capable of creating of what 'people like you and me' felt and thought at the time and, even more so, what they think and feel about these matters today, about the lives they have led since then and about historical developments."

Since its work commenced in 1995, thousands of people have made personal contact with the National Fund. During the course of filing their applications, life stories were evoked and recollected. To mark the 70th anniversary of the "Anschluss" of Austria to the German Reich in the Year of Remembrance 2008, the National Fund began to publish autobiographical texts by its applicants on its website. Meanwhile, around 100 life stories have been published online in German and English. Since 2011, the National Fund has also been producing the book series "Lives Remembered", within the scope of which a further volume has been released, in the run up to the 75th anniversary of the "Anschluss" and in memory of those persecuted by the National Socialist regime. The two volumes of this series have already been distributed for use in lessons to over 500 Austrian schools and can also be purchased at cost price of 5 Euros from the National Fund.