



Comité International de Mauthausen

ENG

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The International Mauthausen Committee was founded 70 years ago in Sankt-Pölten, on 9 May 1953. It is the heir of the underground resistance committee founded in the camp itself by a collective of prisoners representing the diversity of nations.

Who were these prisoners? They were men and women who, each true to his own conviction, had courageously stood up in his own country against Nazi terror and had actively fought against it. These acts of Zivilcourage - civic courage - were usually well-considered decisions taken in full knowledge of the risks to their lives and those of their families.

In 1953, in the particular context of the Cold War, the year Stalin died, the old underground committee was reborn. It was led by survivors from several nations, including Austrians, with the support of the International Federation of Resistance Fighters. It is a utopia which is born in the form of an Austrian association which bears the French name of *Comité International de Mauthausen*. The delegates to the Committee were elected by their comrades. They came from all political horizons, Yugoslavs, Austrians, Greeks, Hungarians, Czechoslovaks, Dutch, Belgians, Italians, French, Luxembourger. Among them, my father Metty and his friends: Drahomir Barta, Antonin Pichon, Jean Lafitte.

The feat was to found an international memory of Mauthausen, whereas the national experiences had been extremely heterogeneous and even more so the national memorial constructions.

For 70 years, the International Committee has honoured its mission, without betraying itself, without dissolving, without discrediting itself, without being carried away by conflicting passions. By remaining a space of shared and reasonable convictions. By taking care not to leave this history in the hands of States to guarantee fidelity to the Mauthausen Oath. In the CIM's appeal of 9 May 1953 from Sankt-Pölten, it is clear that the delegates knew what the link was between them: (quote)

*(...) We swear to keep the oath we made to our missing ones on the day of our liberation.
(...) Faithful to the memory of our dead comrades, we swear, united as we were eight years ago, to fight so that the world will never again know the horrors of war and fascism in any form.*

Everyone can see that the state of the world today presents the International Committee with a challenge that is at least as complex. Everywhere localised wars - but they are less and less localised - threaten the world with a conflict of great proportions. In Europe, Russia's war against Ukraine is, like all wars, exacerbating antagonistic positions.

The challenge for the CIM today is to maintain fidelity to the message contained in the Mauthausen Oath and carried to their death by the camp survivors. It must act in complete independence from national political powers, free as far as possible from interests and instrumentalisation by the powers active on the European continent. It must make the fundamental

notions that protect human rights and affirm the equality of all peoples heard without fail. Those who actively resisted in years of war remain an example to us and must inspire us!

That is why the message formulated for young Europeans more than fifty years ago by Bob Sheppard, President of the International Committee of Mauthausen, remains as strong as ever. First of all, he reminds us that those who actively engaged in the resistance (cit.) *do not seek to derive from this duty, which they performed with great heart, any vain glory, triumph or honour.*

And he continues: *Know that suffering has quite simply opened their eyes a little more than many others to the faults and qualities of men, and if sometimes their gaze seems distant, it is because they are seeing things that they do not want you to see, ever, neither you, nor your people, nor those who will succeed you, nor the people around you.*

Know that suffering has given rise to understanding, that hatred has given rise to goodness. They want, in all modesty, to be a testimony of what should no longer be known in a world that can be so beautiful (...)

Thank you for your attention.
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