

## **Peter Diem: *Austria Semper Reformanda***

### About this documentation

As you approach the middle of your ninth decade, you can't help but think about what will remain of your life. An artist can hope that his works will not perish but will continue to be recognized and respected after his death. I have published a lot in the various phases of my life – as a political scientist working with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), as a Roman Catholic interested in church reform and as a media researcher who worked for ORF for many years. These texts were journal articles or essays and lectures related to the respective profession.

Triggered by my studies at Southern Illinois University (1960/61) and the associated observation of the attitude of Americans to their state symbols, I became very interested in symbols and heraldry, which finally led to the publication of my main work "The Symbols of Austria" in 1995. Later I met the Graz-based Austria-Forum and its spiritus rector Hermann Maurer. I became his co-editor, which opened unimaginable possibilities for internet-based publication of texts and images. Much of it can be found in this five-volume documentary.

The five volumes are entitled "Austria semper reformanda", which is intended to express the fact that I have always and in all my areas of interest dealt with the analysis of the current situation and possible improvements to it.

Other book projects that I was able to realize were the volume "Zeit zur Reform" written with Heinrich Neisser in 1969, the biography of the much too little-known social psychologist Wilfried Daim, that of the master of fantastic

realism, Kurt Regschek, and that of the meritorious mayor of Klagenfurt, Leopold Guggenberger.

Most recently, together with Manfred Welan, I published the book "Ihr Recht geht vom Volk aus (100 Jahre Bundesverfassung) " about the constitution and state symbolism.

These publications are included in this collection of texts in full or in part.

### **Volume 1 Politics**

The model for this volume is Icarus, whose ambitious flight attempt ended in a crash - something that often happened to me and my plans.

The first of the five volumes "Austria semper Reformanda" contains documents from the years 1961 to 2021 that deal with politics in the broadest sense.

It starts with the translation of my master's thesis "American Catholics as a Political Pressure Group" (1961). I had studied at Southern Illinois University to acquire knowledge in political science after my law degree in Vienna. This course of studies was still unknown in Austria at that time. When I suggested to the then professor of constitutional law, Günther Winkler, that this discipline should also be established at the University of Vienna, he replied thoughtfully: "Political science, political science - yes, I can imagine that - but only as *ancilla iurisprudientiae*". It should take until 1970 for the founding of the Austrian Society for Political Science (ÖGPW), in which I was allowed to participate.

The following documents either deal with the topic of Austria becoming a nation or with questions of Austrian

domestic politics. The trigger for this was my work as an organizational consultant and later as a basic researcher at the headquarters of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) in the years 1964-1976.

An important basis of my socio-political thinking was and is Wilfried Daim's main work "The Casteless Society" (1960), based on a Jeshuanian Christianity, which received far too little attention and in which the left-wing Catholic social psychologist describes the effect of subconscious processes in politics and society.

To this day, the topic of reforming and optimizing politics in Austria has kept me captivated. I was primarily concerned with the program of the ÖVP and its relationship to Christian social teaching.

## **Volume 2 - Religion**

The model for this volume is Saint Francis, whose imitation of Jesus of Nazareth I admire. At the same time, I want to honor the work of the current Pope. The second of the five volumes "Austria semper reformanda" contains documents from the years 1956 to 2021 that deal with religion in the broadest sense. Most of them have a specific reform request.

The topic of "religion" is very broad in this documentary. Above all, it is about the "*Ecclesia semper reformanda*". The relevant documents range from comments on the works of Wilfried Daim (who based all his renewal theses on a Christianity understood as "Jesusism") and on reforms in the Catholic Church through to the relationship between the ÖVP and Catholic social teaching. "Left-wing Catholicism", which was very influential after the Second Vatican Council - but is hardly effective today - plays a

major role. Pioneers were the Dutch Catholics, whose Catechism (1966), written for adults, has since been gathering dust on the shelves.

"Left-Catholic" thinking was then very often associated with political left-wing orientation and was something of a "red rag" for many conservative Catholics. Some of the demands of the "Progressive Catholicism" of that time have long since been fulfilled - think of the vernacular in the mass, the position of the celebrant "*versus populum*" or the hand communion. Other proposals, especially those concerning the ecclesiastical hierarchy, such as celibacy and the election of bishops by the people, are far from being realized. What is remarkable, however, is Rome's reorientation towards the Third World, social justice, environmental protection, and criticism of capitalism.

On the other hand, there is still a long way to go before the church fully acknowledges it's not always "Christian" history. It was not until 1960 that the "*perfidii judaei*" were removed from the Good Friday prayers. While the Second Vatican Council in *Nostra Aetate* (1965) lamented "all manifestations of anti-Semitism which have been directed against the Jews at any time and by anyone", this is not a real *mea culpa*. How far the road to a real change of heart still is is shown, among other things, by the fact that relevant publications have not met with any response from the official church - the call to the churches documented here to position themselves at the forefront of the fight against anti-Semitism, serves as an example.

### **Volume 3: Austrian Studies**

The model for this volume is Rudolph IV, the founder, who created Austria's most important symbol with St. Stephen's Cathedral and who, with the founding of the University of Vienna, laid an important foundation for the intellectual development of our country.

In my book "The Symbols of Austria", published in 1995, I dealt extensively with flags, coats of arms and anthems of Austria as well as many other symbols related to Austria.

This interest originally went back to a one-year study trip to the United States, during which I was able to deal with the sometimes-exaggerated symbolic culture of the USA. Soon after my return in 1961, I began publishing on relevant subjects. My particular interest was and is the Austrian national consciousness, which I discussed in 2019 together with Univ. Prof. Dr. Ernst Bruckmüller. The result of this study is printed in full in this documentation.

My interest in traces of Austria in (East) Central Europe developed from my interest in everything typically Austrian, which I documented with many pictures under the motto "Old Austria Today" in the Austria-Forum. My participation in preparing for the World Exhibition "EXPO 95", which did not take place, in the founding of the Mozarthaus Vienna and in the journalism accompanying the "House of History" is based on a patriotism that may seem old-fashioned to some. Since I've always felt and articulated myself as a European, I don't need to blame myself in this regard - today there is far too little awareness of both sides of modern Austrianness. Finally, reference should be made to

the digital Austria Forum (<http://austria-forum.org>) established in 1995, from which many contributions in this book are taken. As co-editor of the Austria Forum, I am proud of this knowledge network, which has now grown to 1.3 million entries related to Austria.

### **Volume 4 Empirical Social Research**

The role model for this volume is the explorer, Christopher Columbus. This volume is primarily about articles that arose from my work as a short-term book market researcher at Verlag Molden (1976), as a media researcher at ORF (1979-1999), as a consultant for online research at Fessel-GfK (1999-2011) and afterwards as a free market researcher and publicist.

The spectrum ranges from the introduction of the ORF Teletest (1990) to the development of quantitative and qualitative methods of broadcasting and online research. There are numerous examples of this here.

A special topic is the confrontation with the Shoah, which brought the horrors of National Socialism to the awareness of the Austrian population again or for the first time through the broadcast of the four-part series "Holocaust" on ORF (1979). Because of the importance of this program, a broad media study was carried out, which is extensively documented in this volume.

The report on a Delphi study on the future of Austria (1978) dates from the time immediately after I worked as a basic researcher for the ÖVP. This form of multi-level discussion and questioning is a not very common method of applied social science.

This volume also contains examples of works on state symbolism. In a broader sense, this also includes the representation of the (political) symbolism of St. Stephen's Cathedral.

In addition to a survey on the federal presidential election in 2016, a detailed representative survey on Austrian national consciousness carried out in 2019 should be mentioned.

### **Volume 5 Essays**

The model for the fifth and last volume of this documentation is Leonardo da Vinci. What fascinates me about him is the diversity of his interests and works. It is known that he was not only a gifted painter and sculptor, but also an architect, engineer, and mechanic. In addition, he dealt with natural philosophy. For example, he considered global warming and climate change to be harbingers of a coming human catastrophe. One cannot help but be amazed when one follows Leonardo's thinking and work - he is and remains the unsurpassed example of a polymath.

In a modest way, my areas of interest and their manifestations are very diverse, which I want to express with this collection of essays. It includes not only texts, but also selected photographs and an overview of my collages. Perhaps this universal interest is related to my life, experience, and knowledge history:

My mother had grown up as a farm girl, deeply Catholic. My father was a liberal city dweller, stamp dealer, mostly active in the coffee house, with many Jewish friends. I went to elementary school after a few nights in a Vienna air raid shelter in a Lower Austrian village. Pre-mechanical farming

with horses and oxen, then transition from the hillering machine, which is no longer known today, to the sheaf binder. Realgymnasium in the 7th district of Vienna, with a wide range of subjects: including five hours of Latin, English, Russian, physics, chemistry, descriptive geometry, philosophy, psychology, shorthand, intensive basketball. Acquaintance with simple professions (electrical engineer) in the Catholic youth group. Austria-American Society. Holiday practice as a car mechanic; Exchange student in England. Traditional law studies including legal history, Roman, German and Church law. Interpreting studies in English ("Colleague – what does overhead camshaft mean?). Two summer internships in a Swiss hotel (dishwasher, car boy, while learning Italian). Studies of law and English. Cooperation with Manfred Welan. Academic translator, Dr. jur. Then I studied political science at Southern Illinois University (M.S. with a thesis on American Catholicism). Military service in the Signal Corps (lieutenant in the reserve), Year at Court (including family and criminal law).

\* 1964 Federal organization officer in the ÖVP headquarters, later basic researcher, and foreign relations officer). Meeting Heinrich Neisser, Wilfried Daim, August Maria Knoll and Friedrich Heer: intensive study of Christian democracy and left-wing Catholicism.

\* 1974 study trip to the end of the war in Vietnam, Bali, India. Left ÖVP.

\* Book market researcher as well as editor and translator at the Fritz Molden publishing house. Implementation of a Delphi study on the future of Austria for the Management Club.



\* Media researcher at ORF: elaboration of *Teletest* and *Radiotest* based on international models, development of quantitative and qualitative research methods) Three-year chair of the European Broadcasting Researchers.

\* Then spent a decade as a consultant for online research at the international market research group GfK. Development of Internet-based survey research, training activities in the Eastern European subsidiaries.

+ Long-term marriage to a Dutch woman – Dutch language skills.

\* Currently freelance media researcher and publicist. Expansion and publishing of the Austrian encyclopedia Austria-Forum (<http://austria-forum.org>). Creation of own websites and implementation of semi-qualitative studies for various clients.

### Honors

\* Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (7.7.1976)

\* Promotional award of the Ludwig Jedlicka Memorial Award for outstanding achievements in the field of history regarding the 19th and 20th centuries (12/10/1996)

\* Professional title "Professor" (05/08/2018)

An introduction to this volume is difficult. Because it is a question of "cabbage and beets" - connected above all by using color in the presentation of lectures, essays and photographs. Here you will find travelogues and reports on research methods as well as contributions on symbolism and heraldry. Some comes from my work for the Austria-Forum, which currently has over 1.3 million objects. The collection of my collages (material images) shown here is not commonplace.