



REPORT ON THE 13TH APC
June 28 – 30, 2019
by
Ernst Löschner

Twelve years ago in 2007, I founded Alpine Peace Crossing (APC). This is therefore the thirteenth time that the Krimmler Peace Dialog and the APC Peace Hike have transpired. Marko Feingold, our honorary member and the discoverer of the original escape route back in 1947, has attended each of the prior APC events in Saalfelden and Krimml. Also this time, in spite of his recent recoveries from both a hip operation and from a lung infection, it would have been so important for him at 106 years of age to be in attendance. On account of the great heat and the long journey from Salzburg, Marko's doctors unfortunately opposed his presence this year. Nonetheless, his essence remained with us all.

This report recounts the following events, in which particular highpoints and records were attained:

- visit to Saalfelden (Givat Avoda),
- 13th Krimmler Peace Dialog,
- 13th APC Peace Hike,
- return to Krimml on June 30, and
- performances of the Interactive Theater.

As this will be my last report, please allow me the indulgence of this rather lengthy chronicle.

Saalfelden

The 13th APC began on June 28 at 11 am within the current "Wallnerkaserne" barracks, where we were again guests of the Austrian Army. Colonel Jörg Rodewald and Alois Hofbauer greeted Councilor from the State of Salzburg Michael Steger as well as 40 APC



friends from Israel, most of which were descendants of "Displaced Persons", people who spent some months in the former Camp Givat Avoda during 1946 - 1947 before continuing their journey from Eastern Europe onwards towards Palestine. Once again, Gal Talit organized and coordinated the trip for our Jewish members while the others brought along t-shirts emblazoned with "Alpine Peace Crossing 2019". Gal's parents Bella und Moshe Talit met each other in this camp, got married at the "Krimmler Taurenhaus" inn, and undertook key

positions in serving the camp residents (<http://www.alpinepeacecrossing.org/o/1244.pdf>).

Sabine Aschauer-Smolik, the director of the Saalfelden Educational Center, led, as in previous years, our group through the former camp. Large format photographs were passed around which highlighted many aspects of camp life from over 70 years ago including the celebration of Jewish festivals, the education of children and adults, and the preparation of these displaced people for a new life in Israel.

In previous years rain inconvenienced this tour, but this time we had glorious, sunny weather, which continued over the next few days. Before the magnificent backdrop of the “Steinernes Meer” mountain range, we concluded this event in the inner courtyard of the former camp with hands locked around in a circle reciting the well-known song “Shalom”.

13th Krimmler Peace Dialogue

Due to the large attendance of over 200 participants, the venue for this event was moved from the Krimml “Denkwerkstatt” to the customary Krimml Grade School. We are particularly indebted to Andrea Mair from the Krimml Tourism Association, who provided a welcoming atmosphere by decorating the stage with sunflowers and by placing large photographs of the Peace Hike.

Since 2013, Michael Kerbler has moderated these proceedings. The Peace Dialogue began at 5 pm on the eve of the Peace Hike. As honored guests, he greeted:

- Cecily Corti - since 2009, honorable member of APC, who in 2014 walked step-by-step with us all the way to Kasern,
- Bettina Reiter – President of Respekt.net,
- Brigitte Höfert, Paul and Traudi Chalupny – Society of the Friends of the Deserters Memorial in Goldegg,
- Lee Rubin-Jakober from “Photographers Without Borders”,
- Helga Amesberger from the Institute for Conflict Research in Vienna, and
- Andreas Kosek from Teatro Caprile/Interactive Theater.



“Humanity” was the main topic chosen for the 13th Peace Dialogue. It is worthwhile in this account to summarize Michael’s thoughts on this subject: “Let us not allow anyone to perish, ourselves included!”

Witty as always, Erich Czerny, the Mayor of Krimml, held his thirteenth welcoming address, in which he particularly mentioned:

- Gal und Uzi Talit, Moti Kas and their 40 guests from all throughout Israel,
- Guy Shachar and his parents Zehava und Pesach from Haifa and Tel Aviv, respectively,
- Regine Kappeler, her refugees and their sponsors,
- Meline Mazinjan from Clearing House Salzburg and her young refugees,

- Aster Karbaum from Hamburg (see was already present at the 1st APC) along with her friends Nora & Adolf Meyer,
- current and previous APC Members of the Board Judith Forthuber, Manfred Schwab, Donatella Magliani, Peter de Bruin, Hans Nerbl, and Rainer Prohaska,
- Wilfried Rohm from Saalfelden, who organized the student exchange with Israel in 2013, and, “last but not least”,
- Erwin Simonitsch from the newspaper “Pinzgauer Nachrichten”.



A particularly pleasant surprise was the presentation by Erich Czerny and Petra Lemberger (Krimml Tourism Association) on behalf of the Community of Krimml to me of a large-sized oil painting created by the Krimml artist Christine Wörster. The motif of the picture, the peak “Dreiherrenspitze” along the “Krimmler Achental” valley, is particularly appropriate, as it was during the descent of this peak with my son Lukas, my nephew Leonhard and our mountain guide Paul Rieder from Maria Alm that I first became first acquainted with the flight of the Jews over the “Krimmler Tauern” pass in 1947. As a passing thunderstorm completely soaked us, Paul Rieder by chance remarked that “the Jews did not even have decent shoes” during their trek across the Alps. It is through this fortunate happenstance that I decided to establish APC on the 60th anniversary of the original, historic crossing. I was inspired by Paul, who laid in my hand the proverbial stone, which I skipped along the water, creating the ever-expanding concentric circles that comprise APC.

It was with great pleasure that I accepted this gift from Erich and as the chronicler of the 13th APC may also relate, that I with much gratitude received a *standing ovation* from all in attendance.

My retrospective on the past 12 years of APC was thus doubly emotional for me, since this is the last APC that I as Chairman of the Board will undertake. I presented several slides that were prepared with the help from Petra Navara and Chris Musil. Due to time constraints, I had to rush through most of them, although you can go through them yourself [here](#).

I presented the following overview of the three main tenets of APC:

- Already 5,000 people from Europe, Israel and the US have attended the Krimmler Peace Dialogue along with the other events in Saalfelden and in Krimml. Historical and current key topics were presented through prominent speakers and panelists. I hold fast to my belief that “APC stands for peace, tolerance, solidarity, and caring. In these respects the world has become much poorer and colder; only through climate change will things become warmer. Never before are so many people, over 70,000,000, refugees of war, persecution and destitution”.
- Over the years, 2,500 people have participated in the APC Peace Hike, 1,000 of which managed to complete the complete, 8-hour journey by foot over the “Krimmler Tauern” pass to South Tyrol. A particular highlight was the presence of the Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen along with 320 hikers, including many current refugees, at the “Windbachalm” meadow during the 11th APC in 2017. By now, three generations of witnesses from Israel, Canada and the United States have already retraced step-by-step the 1947 escape route. This is also a credit to the Israeli Ambassador Dan Ashbel, who in a radio program broadcast in 2007, sought out the participants of the original crossing of the “Krimmler Tauern” pass. For the first time in 2018, children aged 9 – 11 years old also undertook the complete crossing to Kasern, which also included the blind hiker from Ulm, Germany Angelika Walch. She honored us again this year accompanied by her sister Christine.
- APC commitment to social welfare began in mid-2011 with its approval as a charity enjoying tax deductible status. By the end of this year, over 800,000 Euro in donations has been raised for social and refugee projects, of which 300,000 Euro or more than a third was disbursed on education and integration, 190,00 Euro or roughly a quarter was spent on welfare, housing and reuniting families, and 130,000 Euro or a sixth was given out for health services including psychotherapy. For our most important cultural project, the “Grove of Flight” in the Achental valley, 35,000 Euro was appropriated in a joint venture with the Hohe Tauern National Park service. I am most grateful not only for the financial support of the many private donators, but also from our sponsors, in particular the Karl Kahane Foundation, Voestalpine, and our friends at the major banks.

Three of our own APC projects that were developed from 2016 – 2017, deserve special recognition. The integration project “Musik verbindet” (“music connects”) under the leadership of Hans Nerbl brought refugee and local musicians together in a series of 30 performances held in the city and over the state of Salzburg. Eighteen refugee families were able to pay the security deposits on their rented apartments through the “ZUHAUSE” initiative, a venture that was awarded the “SozialMarie” prize for civil innovation. Only in the case of the “WIR GEBEN” project, also an awardee of high distinction, was our success more limited than we had hoped.

As APC milestones, I would like to excerpt from my PowerPoint presentation the following key highlights:

- Palestinian Film Day organized by Peter de Bruin (2011),
- Salzburg Ceremony with his Holy Highness Dalai Lama and the 6th APC with Katja Sturm-Schnabl (2012),
- the conceptualization and the installation of 7 Peace Pyramids by Ernst Löschner and Hans Nerbl in collaboration with the Hohe Tauern National Park service (2013),
- two student exchanges with Israel organized by Hans Nerbl (2010) and Wilfried Rohm (2013), personally supported by the Ambassador Aviv Shir-On,
- an appeal for a humane refugee policy, initiated by Ernst Löschner und Michael Kerbler (2013),
- the “Artists for Syria” theatrical event which raised 66,000 Euro (2015),
- a broadcast on the radio program “Radiokulturhaus” memorializing the 70th anniversary of the Jewish exodus in Krimml with Franz Vranitzky, Anton Pelinka and Friedrich and Traude Cerha (2017),
- Ilija Trojanov and Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen at the 11th APC (2017),
- the ecumenical dedication of the Grove of Flight (2017),
- Alexandra Förderl-Schmid and Anton Pelinka at the 12th APC (2018),
- a broadcast on the radio program “Radiokulturhaus” memorializing the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel with Talya Lador-Fresher und Julia Rabinowich (2018), and
- a cooperative agreement with Respekt.net (2019).

Six weeks ago, we sent out a press release regarding the above collaboration in which the crowdfunding of Respekt.net will be combined with the tax deductibility afforded by APC in funding and managing joint charitable ventures. Already in the first year, we are expecting to finance up to 10 projects with a total budget of 50,000 Euro. Bettina Reiter, President of Respekt.net, maintains that “The cooperation with APC is for us a milestone. We see a true win-win situation in the funding of creative, charitable projects”.

In September 2019, I will hand over the chairmanship of APC into the hands of a newer, younger, and very competent board of directors. A press conference to this effect will occur soon after the next general assembly. The three main efforts that define APC, the Krimmler Peace Dialog, the APC Peace Hike, and APC’s charitable efforts, are guaranteed to continue and will be even expanded upon. I present Chris Musil as APC’s new general secretary and thank Petra Navara for her valuable contributions in that position over the last two years.

As an honorary member, I will remain close to APC and will return, like Marko Feingold, each year to Krimml; however, I cannot promise that I will be in attendance at the 43rd APC in the year 2049, when I too will be 106 years old, just like Marko is today!

Judith Forthuber, APC chairperson and the leader behind the installation of the 49 trees, 1 prism and 2 natural stones that comprise the [Grove of Flight](#), provided the spiritual highpoint of the Krimmler Peace Dialogue with her [video homage](#) to this blessed place. This presentation left a deep impression upon all of the 200 attendees.

Judith related to me, “I was particularly moved by the many entries into the Grove-Book that lies by the prism. All hikers are heartedly invited to write down their thoughts and impressions”. For my part, I extend this invitation to all participants, and of course to all the friends of APC who are reading this report as well, to send in their own personal “testimonial(s)” to one or more of the 500 people and institutions honored in the Grove of Flight. These essays which recognize and exemplify those qualities embodied in the Grove of Flight will be posted free-of-charge on the website. If you wish to support the maintenance of the Grove, including the replacement plantings of damaged trees, or if you would like to sponsor a natural stone, then please send in your tax deductible (in Austria) contribution in any amount you feel is appropriate. Unfortunately, the unusually harsh winter last year forces us to replant many of the trees.



An exceptional and novel highpoint was the first-time bestowal of the APC Peace Prize, after a suggestion by my brother Hans Löschner. For now on, this prize will be issued yearly to those personalities whose exceptional service in at least one of APC's three main activities, Krimmler Peace Dialog, APC Peace Hike and charitable work, deserves recognition.

The Board of Directors decided that there should be three prize winners for 2019, each of whom will receive 2,000 Euro from an APC member, who wishes to remain anonymous. The winners were Erich Czerny, Mayor of Krimml, Hans Nerbl from Saalfelden, and Guy Shachar from Haifa, Israel. In addition to the monetary award, each recipient was presented with an award certificate along with a large, silver memorial coin designed by the Krimml medalist Helmut Zobl, who designed and made these medallions for the 1st APC back in 2007.

Members of the Board of Directors, Judith Forthuber, Manfred Schwab and Ernst Löschner, provided the laudatory introductions to each of the prize winners.

Judith Forthuber: “Through his vigilance and his engagement Erich Czerny sets an example for every mayor! He is a competent and socially conscious person with a pronounced sense of the humanity and culture that binds people together”.

Manfred Schwab: “Hans Nerbl played a very important part in the development of APC, in particular with the Peace Dialogue over the many years. He co-created the APC Peace Pyramids and led the project *Music Connects* around Salzburg in 2016. Thereby he contributed an invaluable, integrative service in bringing refugee musicians together with local performers and by inspiring children through drumming workshops”.

Ernst Löschner: “Like no one else, Guy Shachar has as a documentarian of the genesis and of the goals of APC made our association world famous through the production of his numerous videos that he posts on YouTube, in particular, his filming of the ‘APC-Story’ and of the ecumenical dedication of the Grove of Flight. We have him to thank that even today over 70 years after the Krimml Exodus of 1947, we still find new relatives of those who participated”.

All three prize winners expressed in moving words their thanks for this special honor. Erich Czerny immediately donated his financial award to support the upkeep and the public awareness of the Grove of Flight. Hans Nerbl, who thanked his wife Céline for her support, also pledged a part of his prize to fund APC efforts in disaster relief. Finally, Guy Shachar requested that his share be donated towards the installation of another natural stone, which will be placed in Israel along the Habricha Trail at the Carmel Beach Forest and which will be dedicated in solidarity with APC and the Grove of Flight.

Our keynote speaker, **Cecily Corti**, the founder of VinziRast, a private organization dedicated to the care of the homeless, left us with a deep, authentic impression. She spoke freely, recalling her own flight from Slovenia with her parents as a child, and revealed how her personal calamities slowly develop an ethos in her psyche. In her discussion with Michael Kerbler, she declared that it was not any one specific key event which motivated her altruism, but rather it was her desire “to get to the bottom of things”, as she wrote in her book. Thus, her decision to found Vinzirast came naturally and without further thought.

She informed us of her personal credo: “everyone can DO something, when the moment arrives to stand by someone, whose situation is worse than one’s own”.

The time flew quickly by, so Michael, after his interview with Cecily had ended at 7:15 pm, invited us all in the name of the community of Krimml to a sumptuous buffet, which due to the fine weather was held outdoors. The planned extensive discussion with the public at large could not be realized this year. This program item will hopefully be fulfilled at next year’s Krimmler Peace Dialogue.

By the way, the entire event was filmed by Mohammad Shakeri, a protégé of Regine Kappeler, for broadcast on the Okto cable channel. Clips from his video will be made

available to APC as a remembrance to all those honored, for inclusion on the APC website, and to display at future events.

APC Peace Hike

Shortly after 7 am on the following day, June 29, under spectacular skies, Erich Czerny, the innkeeper of the Tauernhaus Friedl Geisler and I greeted all the hikers. The mood was splendid, notwithstanding the absence of Marko Feingold, which was felt by us all. His message of greeting was still present, though, transferred to me through his wife Hanna for



all those on the path. He remains with and for us.



Also absent were the Haflinger horses from the Austrian Army, which for reasons of costs could not be obtained. My alternative plan was to bring elephants instead across the Alps, a repeat of a well-known ancient event. This, though, would only have been possible in India or in a few other European Union countries such as Slovakia. In Austria, elephants and other animals are rightly protected from such exploitation.



Once again the APC Peace Hike was well supported by the rangers of the Hohe Tauern National Park service, by Peter Nothdurfter and Franz Gensbichler from the Krimml mountain rescue service, and by the doctors Uwe Mendel and Gilbert Mayer. You all are most

heartedly congratulated for your efforts! Altogether, 246 hikers made their way to the “Windbachalm” pasture. After 320 and 251 participants in 2017 and 2018, respectively, this was the third best turnout since the inception of the APC Peace Hike in 2007. This is even more impressive, given the intense heat over this weekend. Thus the 13th APC achieved a

“bronze medal” in terms of total attendance, but attained the gold medal with regards to the number who continued on to Kasern, around 150 hikers, or more than half of those that started.



The refugee and teacher Liaqat Ali Hamed spoke at the “Windbachalm” pasture about his traumatic experiences back in Afghanistan as well as his gratitude towards the people of Austria for welcoming him in. Unfortunately, even after three years, his application for permanent residency is still not approved. Up until now, there have only been rejections.



In contrast, I can report that the Sudanese doctor Nizar Mutwali, who spoke in the presence of Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen back in 2017, will finally be allowed, for the time being, to live and work in Austria after four long years of constant struggle and disappointment with the adjudication of his application by a judge in Innsbruck. His future is still not certain, though, as his current status is still only temporary.

Upon seeing the many Israelis who took part in the hike, I recalled the touching Jewish prayer which David Yogeve together with his three adult sons sang in Hebrew two years ago. Our friend Alois Steger, who once again on the prior day walked barefoot from Prettau to the Krimmler Peace Dialogue, bid each of the hikers in name welcome, including the many

from South Tyrol. Included in this group was once more Federica dalla Pria from the Alexander Langer (Peace-) Foundation. For Alois, it was also his thirteenth crossing of the “Krimmler Tauern” pass, all barefoot, excluding the one year when the path was covered by two feet of snow.



As in previous years, we were met upon our arrival in Kasern with lively violin music played by Karl Kogler and Elfriede Hallama. At the end of their recital, they performed again the opus “Shalom, Friede, Peace, Pace”, which Karl specifically composed for the 2017 APC and which also premiered then in Kasern.

The traditional welcoming buffet of South Tyrolian delicacies sponsored by our friends Robert Steger, Mayor of Prettau, and Helmut Klammer, Mayor of St. Johann/Ahrntal, was even more magnificent this year. Their joint greeting with Erich Czerny along with the message of peace and fellowship with APC was enthusiastically received and applauded by the audience. Chaim Litvak from Israel, who with his son Amit made the crossing to Kasern and back, stirringly recounted how his father worked for the Bricha in Gnadewald, Tyrol.

Two further records were causes for celebration: 7-year-old Leni Czerny, the daughter of the Mayor of



Krimml, is the youngest girl to have completed the entire way from the “Krimmler Tauernhaus” inn over the “Krimmler Tauern” pass to Kasern! The previous record was shared between eight-year-old girls from Austria and from Israel.



APC's overall youngest participant ever is 7½-year-old Nazzareno Rauchbauer, a nephew of our refugee advisor Ursula Rauchbauer, who came all the way from California, USA and whose effort was heartedly applauded.

For those who wished to return the same day to Krimml, 3 busses were reserve, of which two left at 5:30 pm

while the third waited until 6:30 pm for a group of exhausted young Israelis to arrive. A Jewish mother shed tears, but a “happy end” was had by all, even for a hiker from Leogang, who on account of sudden fainting attack while ascending the mountain pass had to be airlifted back to Krimml.

During the return bus ride, one of the two buses which left earlier developed problems. Fortunately, the passengers on this bus could all be transferred into the third, following bus, so that even this incident was not a problem.

Return to Krimml

Most of the approximately 50 participants who wished to return to Krimml on the following day (July 30), found quarters at the “Berghotel Kasern”, for which I and Günther Steger had arranged a special APC rate. Around 20 hikers met there for the traditional dinner prepared by “Mama” Paula, the mother of the innkeeper Igor Voppichler. He and the APC member Helga Ameseder celebrated their birthdays that evening as well. The violinists Karl Kogler and Elfriede Hallama were again on hand and regaled us with their table music.

Sunday morning, a small bus was arranged for the first time to take eight people back to Krimml, although three of those left already in Lienz in order to take a train back to Vienna. As the bus left at 10:30 am, I and Guy Shachar had an hour and a half to enjoy a leisurely walk to the beautiful “Rötbach” waterfalls and then back to Kasern.

For those who wished to return to Krimml by foot over the “Birnlücke” pass, this additional hike began already at 8 am. Once again, a new record was attained with 48 wanderers making this arduous journey. Before their departure, I arranged for a farewell photograph.



Due to problems with my lumbar discs, I was unable to join this group, although my brother Hans who did go along, mentioned that the return hike “was never more picturesque than it was today”. Although the extreme hot weather continued, the altitude made the heat more bearable even given the complete lack of wind at the “Birnlücke” pass. The well-experienced and physically fit group had little problem negotiating the large snowfields along the route. Earlier than usual at around 3 pm, the hikers returned by bus from the “Innerkeesalm” pasture back to Krimml.



Interactive Theater

The interactive-theater play “Ins gelobte Land! - Eretz Austria?” by Andreas Kosek was once again viewed with much enthusiasm. This year, five performances were staged around the dates of the 13th APC in order to allow students from the region to witness this stirring

reenactment of the flight of the Jews. With a total attendance of 180 people, of which 45 were children, yet another record was achieved.



Shortly after the end of the 13th APC, we already began to receive ecstatic [replies](#) from the attendees, particularly from our Israeli friends.

All that is left now is for me to thank all those who made the 13th APC such a success! Mark your calendar; the 14th APC will take place over June 26 - 28, 2020. It will be organized by my successors. Let us look forward with joy upon this event!

Text: Ernst Löschner

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Photographs from the 13th Krimmler Peace Dialogue are courtesy of Erwin Simonitsch - Pinzgauer Nachrichten.