

Traditionally many Jews lived here in the 2. District of Vienna also called "Leopoldstadt". Before the takeover of the Nazis, they accounted for more than 40 percent of the population. Life and relationships in Leopoldstadt, the image that was in the streets, was radically altered by the effects of National Socialism.

National Socialism was not simply a mood or a phenomenon. National Socialism was an attitude of mind which was taken and lived by a lot of people of this country. National Socialism was not an abstract thought or idea. It was omnipresent injustice and meant cruel acts. I emphasize this fact because, in retrospect, it is impossible to understand that the barbarism, the terror, the murders of men and women were carried out by people who lived door-to-door. They could possibly meet each other every day on the streets.

30,000 people, who lived in this district or were forced to live in collection camps here in this district and afterwards were deported and murdered.

How was it possible?

This week I participated in an event, where the local population was integrated into the planning of traffic safety in the quarter including three schools. The aim of our Social Democratic Policy is to improve the quality in public space for all people and to make the way to school safer for children. I was stunned when visitors to that event had repeatedly pointed out their worries about the noise, which children would cause, when they stay in front of the school. The summit of the very emotional discussion was: "The children should not be outside! The children should remain in school!"

With such wishes of the population, I was taken aback. "The children" are in this case for any irritating, unwanted persons. At the same time, children are the most vulnerable people in our society. What picture do we get of a society where people just want to have others gone? What are people capable of if they are confirmed in this intolerant mood? The symbolism of this debate last Tuesday made me very touched and thoughtful. Just as the demand to let the children disappear, there are numerous other signs that point to a growing intolerance in society: the hate-borne communication on the Internet, the scornful language used by some politicians, the populist and imprudent style, which is used by the most powerful newspapers also in Austria.

Therefore our **goal and our duty** have to show tirelessly the small and great disregard of humanity: this means to advocate oneself for tolerance, to advocate for the dialogue, to advocate for finding solutions together. Even if there are big differences between people on the first glue, there will always be similarities if

you search for them. The similarities are our chance to find a beginning with those who are apparently opponents.

The population of the city is growing. Very soon there will live two million inhabitants in Vienna. This means that public space will be used more intense in the future. Respect and tolerance - not only in the public space, but also in the entire social life must be a permanent task for us. We have to be aware of this. This challenge is not limited to Vienna. This challenge is a global one - it is related to the current refugee movements, it is related to wars and hostilities that have been geopolitically justified for decades.

But it all starts with my and your individual tolerance and also our courage.

The only way to achieve is, when we are courageous to speak, when we show a high level of attentiveness to the choice of the words. This can be tools for our work against the heated mood. Therefore, I would like to encourage you to talk with friends, relatives, especially with your children and grandchildren about this project “stones of remembrance”. Point actively to words of intolerance, to populism and to acts of hatred! Let's make others thoughtful, when it comes to discussions and controversies.

Through initiatives like this, an essential contribution is being made to maintain the memory of the atrocities in the past. And, more importantly, this initiative urges us to have a sensitive ear and sensitive eyes for people who despise statements, deeds and other human beings. I would like to personally thank all initiators for the four stations opened today:

Thank you: Adelina Teller

Thank you: Arthur Haas

Thank you: Uri Dromi

Thank you: Lukas Gehrke

Thank you all for your commitment!

And thank you to Daliah Hindler, Matthias Beier, Wally Steiner and Ernst Fitzer for the continuation of this important work.