

The ANU National Europe Centre and the Embassy of the Republic of Austria

Invite you to the symposium

AFTER THE IRON CURTAIN: TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE, 1989-2009

MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2009, 16.00 – 19.30PM

Venue: ANU National Europe Centre, 1 Liversidge St (Bldg 67C), Canberra, 2601 ACT

RSVP by Thursday 12 November 1.00pm - E: europa@anu.edu.au

The first breach in the Iron Curtain occurred along the Austro-Hungarian border. The new Hungarian reform Communist government of Miklós Németh entered office in late November 1988 and ordered the removal of the border installations in early May 1989. A few months later, on the 27th of June, the Foreign Ministers of Austria (Alois Mock) and Hungary (Gyula Horn) became agents of a historical moment when they cut through the Iron Curtain near Klingenbach, in Burgenland. In the weeks after the 11th of September, more than 50,000 people crossed the border from the German Democratic Republic into Austria. This was the first step in the fall of the Iron Curtain, which eventually led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall on November 9 – the symbolic end of the Cold War.

The collapse of Communism in Europe twenty years ago has transformed Central Europe, while presenting both opportunities and challenges to the ongoing process of democratization in the region. Nurturing social, cultural and linguistic diversity; maintaining rule of law, facilitating political and economic integration; and creating spaces for private and public memories, are all important processes of the transition to democracy in post-communist countries. Indeed, they are vital for democracy in all societies, post-authoritarian or otherwise. This panel will discuss the transitions and transformations in Central Europe since the fall of the Iron Curtain. The panellists will bring their expertise in politics, history, media and the law to discuss some of the specific challenges and the achievements of democratization over the past two decades. The event will conclude with a public lecture on human rights in the context of the transition from communist to democratic rule.

PROGRAMME:

4pm Welcome by HE Dr Hannes Porias, Ambassador of Austria

and Professor Paul Pickering, Acting Director, ANU National Europe Centre

4:05 Introduction of Speakers by Chair, Dr Julie Thorpe, Deputy Director, ANU National Europe Centre

Part I: Eyewitnesses to the Fall

4:15 Mr Ernst Gelegs, *Austrian Broadcasting Corporation*: The Fall of the Iron Curtain as seen from Budapest

4:30 Mr Dennis Shanahan, *The Australian*: The Fall of the Iron Curtain as seen from Australia

4:45 Dr Bruce Kent, Australian National University: A Historian's Perspective on the Fall

5-5:30 Break for coffee and tea

Part II: Transitions in Hungary and Germany

5:30 HE Mr Gábor Csaba, Ambassador of Hungary: Twenty Years On in Hungary

5:45 HE Mr Michael Witter, Ambassador of Germany: Reunification and Transformation in Germany

6:00 Panel Discussion and Questions, Chair's Remarks

6:30 Address by The Hon. Mr Robert McClelland, Federal Attorney-General of Australia

7 :15 Questions