A son's death, a father's centenary:
The Kreiskys and postwar Austria

Former Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (1911-1990), was arguably the most important Austrian politician of the postwar era. Accordingly, celebrations are being held around the country to honor the centenary of his birth. Unfortunately his son, social scientist Peter Kreisky—himself a noted figure in Austrian public life—will not be able to participate. The younger Kreisky died on December 27, 2010 while hiking in Mallorca near his father's summer house.

Not surprisingly, the two men's lives were intertwined. Bruno Kreisky became active in the social democratic party (SPÖ) in the 1920s, got arrested under Dolfuß's Austrofascist regime, and again after the Anschluß by the Nazis before he could escape to Sweden.

In Sweden he married Vera Fürth. Peter was born in 1944 and their daughter Suzanne was born in 1948.

In 1950 Bruno Kreisky returned to Austria and started his political career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1967 he became the head of the SPÖ, won the elections of 1970, and became the first Jewish chancellor of Austria. In the still antisemitic Austria, he could only succeed by cooperating with former Nazis, which resulted in a conflict with Simon Wiesenthal.

Kreisky's governments were responsible for formidable reforms in the fields of education, social welfare, economy, women's rights and the penal code. But for many young leftists, including his son Peter, this was not enough. They criticized Kreisky's pro-nuclear position and became active against militarism and the Austrian way of hiding the Nazi past. Peter and his wife, the political scientist Eva Kreisky, became activists of a new antiauthoritarian, pro-feminist, and pro-ecology left, often in conflict with Bruno Kreisky, who even tried to suspend his son from the Socialist Party.

As a result, Peter Kreisky never got an important political post within the SPÖ, though he stayed active in public life. He was one of the co-founders of the *Republikanischer Club—Neues Österreich*, an organization of intellectuals fighting against antisemitism, racism, and the extreme right. As a social scientist, he worked for the Arbeiterkammer, the Austrian chamber of workers.

Bruno Kreisky, of course, played an important role in the establishment of the Center for Austrian Studies, sponsored by the Austrian public on the occasion of the American Bicentennial in 1977. He also participated in the decision to make the University of Minnesota its home, visiting the campus at the Center's opening in 1977 and delivering the Kann lecture in 1985.

Kreisky resigned in 1983 and died in 1990. But the public attention around his 100th birthday shows that he is still highly recognized today. His son Peter is survived by his wife, Eva, and his son, Jan.

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