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Farewell to Dr. Kurt Hofmann

17 Jul 2020

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Dr. Kurt Hofmann

Photo: Nationalfonds/Kreinjobst

Dr. Kurt Hofmann, retired Vice-President of the Supreme Court and long-standing member of the Claims Committee of the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism, passed away on Saturday, 4 July 2020, at the age of 88.

Dr. Kurt Hofmann was born in Vienna. An outstanding jurist, he not only enjoyed a successful career as a judge, but was also active in the academic domain – contributing, for example, to the third edition of the “Rummel Commentary” on the (Austrian) General Civil Code – and gave lectures at several universities among others. In addition, he held numerous positions on examination boards and senates. In 1998 he ended his professional career as Vice President of the Supreme Court. In 2001 he was nominated by Austria as a member of the Claims Committee of the General Settlement Fund and performed this task with unwavering dedication and on a voluntary basis for 17 years until the dissolution of the body.

The Chairman of the Claims Committee, Sir Franklin Berman, praised Kurt Hofmann as the best possible choice for this difficult undertaking, who had contributed significantly to its success. Sir Franklin emphasized his appreciation of Dr. Hofmann's encyclopedic knowledge, his legal abilities and his strong sense of justice, and also highlighted his personal qualities:

“Dr. Hofmann was as near as one could come to the ideal choice for Austrian member of the Committee. He combined an encyclopaedic knowledge, often into the finest detail, of conditions in Austria in the post-War period, together with wide legal understanding and juristisches Feingefühl [legal sensitivity], and a burning inner sense for justice and injustice, and all expressed with kindness and old-school graciousness, including towards the many young staff members of the Entschädigungsfonds [General Settlement Fund].”

The employees of the General Settlement Fund were greatly saddened to learn of Dr. Hofmann's passing. His vast legal expertise and not least his exact knowledge of the law of succession were of immense importance, particularly in view of the applicants and their descendants who had been displaced throughout the world. Above all, however, the young team's work in cooperation with Dr. Hofmann was always characterized by mutual high esteem – his kindness, his good humor and above all his ongoing commitment to this important task will specially be remembered.

Dr. Hofmann's laudable work has been honored on several occasions, most recently in 2018 when he was awarded the Austrian Cross of Honor for Science and Art 1st Class for his exceptional commitment in the service of the victims of National Socialism.

Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria and the General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism, looks back on the years of cooperation with gratitude: *“It was an honor for me to work with Kurt Hofmann. Our thoughts are with his wife Grete and his family. May the memory of Kurt Hofmann always be a blessing.”*