

Austria

Anna-Maria Wallner interviewed **Hanna Molden**.

Interview date: August 2019

Wallner: Dear Ms Molden, thank you for agreeing to be one of the *voices of Europe* for our 'Archive of Voices'.

Molden: First, I would like to introduce you to all of our international readers and listeners: You were born in Vienna in 1940, where you also grew up. Throughout your life, you've commuted between the city and the Tyrolean mountains. You obtained a doctorate in political science. You were married to the late Fritz Molden (who died in 2014), heir to the daily newspaper '*Die Presse*', for which I currently work. After he sold his shares in the newspaper publisher, he started his own business as a book publisher. His company went bankrupt in 1982. Together, you have two sons and for a while you translated books from English to German at his publishing company. Later, you worked as a columnist for the *Wochenpresse*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Bunte*, and also authored several books. As we mentioned before, we want to talk about your life. I would like to start at the beginning.

Wallner: My first question is: Do you know why you were named Hanna?

Molden: I remember it well. My mother had a friend whom she considered the epitome of beauty. She was a lovely woman, and her name was Hanna. This had an amusing consequence: when I was taken to be baptized, the priest asked: 'What name should the girl be baptized with?' My mother answered 'Hanna', and the priest said that Hanna is not a Catholic name and so he wouldn't do it. After some discussion, my godmother said: 'Ok, if you don't want to baptize her, we'll take her back home.'

Wallner: What do you know about the day you were born?

Molden: It was during the war. My father was a painter and had been drafted into the army as a war correspondent in Crimea. I had a sister who was slightly older than me and I was the second child and probably not so important to my family – so they didn't share much with me. It was not a complicated birth and my mother was perfectly healthy – that's all I know.

Wallner: Which role did you play in your family as the younger of two sisters?

Molden: My sister died as a baby girl. I grew up as an only child, but I had two cousins who were both around my age. I had many cousins, both male and female, and all of us – especially during the post-war years when nobody had anything – were lovingly cared for by my grandmother and my aunt. We were very close and one of them was the most important person in my life. Sadly, neither of them are alive today.

Wallner: Did you have a role that was in any way unique?

Molden: I'm not sure if I actually had a role. I think children weren't the centre of attention as much as they are today. Nowadays, children are either idolized or nobody wants them, and they are pushed aside. People invest practically everything in their children, but in my time, that wasn't the case. I had everything I needed, but I wasn't the centre of attention. But I enjoyed the limelight again when my mother remarried – after my father had passed away. With the new marriage I became the absolute centre of attention for my mother and my new father.

Wallner: How did this come about?

Molden: Because my stepfather had an enchanting personality and was a real 'ladies' man. He was totally in love with my mother, but under normal circumstances he would have never married because he was against marriage. But he believed one should marry into a family in which there already is a child, because otherwise I would have ended up in a difficult situation. And he was right. You have to realize that things were different in the late 1940s and early 1950s. People would have said, oh dear, she's in a difficult situation, the mother doesn't have a husband. My stepfather anticipated all of this and married my mother. I could not have wished for a better 'natural' stepfather. I was a very happy child. There was a basic sense of trust – if, as a child, you feel and know you are being loved, nothing can happen to you later.

Wallner: Did you know your grandparents?

Molden: My paternal grandfather had died but my paternal grandmother was an iconic figure in my life. I got to know my mother's father; and I remember him as an elderly man who smoked cigars – and it is said that that's what he died from. And my maternal grandmother was a beautiful, very intelligent, but nervous woman, who was never really accepted by her family. It wasn't until much later when I was in my 20s that I slowly began to understand how these figures fit into my life, and what they were really like. That's when I realized that my grandmother was a poor soul.

Wallner: Did you talk about the First and the Second World War?

Molden: It wasn't a big deal for us because we didn't really talk much about it. I had two aunts who were pro-Hitler and found him fascinating, and they remained unrelenting and believed he was a great man. That really marginalized them. One of my wonderful cousins lived at one of my aunt's houses for a while and they had a dreadful fight about it all.

Wallner: But did anyone ever talk about the darker war years, from either perspective?

Molden: My stepfather talked about it, but my mother never wanted to. She was totally apolitical. An enchanting, charming woman; warm-hearted, a person everybody loved who had lots of empathy, but was not interested in politics at all. Everything I picked up was from my stepfather. He was born in 1900 and shared many stories with me – about the political atmosphere, about his schooldays, about his studies.

Wallner: What are your memories of the war? You were five years-old when the war ended.

Molden: Of the war? Deep inside, I have unbelievably vivid memories. I can still picture some things as if they were right before me. I don't remember my biological father. He died in 1945. I was five years old and he came back home at the end of 1943 or the beginning of 1944; he had lung disease and had contracted tuberculosis. We lived in a very nice villa in one of Vienna's most beautiful districts. I can still remember the parlour in which they accommodated my father – he was highly contagious, and penicillin didn't exist yet. I went to the high double doors every day; he was very frail and resting in the corner; we waved to each other. Then my grandmother pulled me away and said: 'Don't get too close'. I wasn't allowed to talk to him, so he blew me a kiss. I remember his face. Once, when my father had home leave, he rushed into the nursery that my sister and I shared – there were light curtains with a flower pattern, which I can still see quite clearly – and he lifted me up into the air. I can still see his face from above. That's one of the memories I still have. There are many horrible images about the war in my mind, but they are mainly fuzzy thanks to my grandmother. She took great effort to eradicate all the horrors from that time.

Wallner: How did she do that?

Molden: Let's use the example of a bomb raid on Vienna. Even if it wasn't as bad in our suburb as elsewhere, I would still hear the radio going 'beep, beep, beep' and a voice saying 'something is approaching Vienna', and it would become louder and louder. As soon as we heard the beep-sound from the radio – I would take a small backpack sitting ready for me with a 'Kasperl' on top of it that I always brought to bed – and we would go into the basement. Slowly, other residents also came down – though only women and children, and even then, only one child apart from me. And what did my grandmother do? She had a coat, or maybe it was a kind of cloak, and she said to me and the other boy who also lived in the house: 'Let's all go under the cloak and tell each other stories.' Apparently, I once asked her to recite a poem – that helped us to forget the war and the bombs.

Wallner: You mentioned Kasperl – did you keep any other item from your childhood?

Molden: I still have a small rubber doll from the 50s. I had a stepfather by then and we went to Switzerland, the promised land, in his first car. Chocolate! Even then, you still couldn't buy everything in Vienna. There was a department store called Jelmoli and I came across this baby doll with her mouth open and she had a bottle to feed her. She also had a hole in her backside so the water could run back out. I was given the doll as a gift! I still have it today. It's in a laundry cupboard in Alpbach, in the countryside, with a jacket that my mother had crocheted. She will probably sit on that cupboard until the end of my life.

Wallner: When was the very first time you went abroad?

Molden: The very first time I went abroad was with friends who didn't have children and who really liked me. My father didn't have a car at the time. We went to Venice and Aquileia and to Grado.

Wallner: How old were you then?

Molden: I was seven. Nowadays, I spend every summer in Grado. I still wait for those huge waves, but of course there aren't any now because back then I was a small child and the waves seemed so tall to me.

Wallner: Did your family do a lot of travelling?

Molden: Not much. We always spent our summer holidays at Grundlsee, in the Styrian Salzkammergut. Even today, that place is still magical to me. My first flirtations, my first bicycle, all that happened at Grundlsee. We always stayed in the same privately-owned house, and always with the same group of people. Did one go on big trips? No! I went to Paris as a student, but I'm probably jumping too far ahead now. I had handed in my dissertation and left angrily for Paris together with a girlfriend. I thought I'd find a job. I went there by train. The very first time I ever flew on an airplane was when I got married in Salzburg.

Wallner: You flew to your own wedding?

Molden: Yes, I flew to my own wedding. I was 26 then. Sitting in an airplane was much more exciting than getting married. It was sensational. But I was a late bloomer because everyone else I knew had already travelled by plane.

Wallner: What is the most important thing that your parents or your ancestors have passed on to you and taught you? Both in terms of values and material things.

Molden: When I got married, I owned a small, old-fashioned writing table and a Biedermeier room closet. It was a very pretty type of chest which I used to store things I had collected for my future marriage. Basically, all I had when I got married was myself – I had nothing to inherit. The apartment where we are currently sitting is not a condominium, it's a flat that my stepfather rented in 1933 or 1934. It's where I grew up and nothing has changed. My mother taught me lots of sentimental things and also that people are friendly to you if you treat them well. My mother had a radiant smile and everyone she met liked her because she was so open-minded. She was a straightforward individual. That's the way it was!

Everything intellectual stemmed from my stepfather. I went to first grade on the outskirts of Vienna and after that I went to primary school in a neighbouring district. I had to take religious education classes. When I came home, I said to my stepfather: 'Dad, some don't have to go to religious education classes. They can either have time off or go to PE classes or something similar.' I remember that someone said to my father: 'You never go to church.' But he replied: 'That's a different story – I was an adult when I decided not to go, but before you make a decision, you have to understand all the possibilities. You have to inform yourself. Maybe one day you will be a Buddhist, or you might convert to Judaism or maybe you won't believe in God at all. To start with, you will go where we all went, to Catholic church. You don't have to go to church every Sunday, but you should see what it's like.' He always demonstrated this kind of freedom with everything he did. His attitude was that all individuals ought to pay attention to the things around them first, only then could they reasonably form an opinion.

Wallner: What is your relationship with religion today?

Molden: It has changed totally. It's got a lot to do with age and also with the final years of my husband's life. My husband came from a family in which all members were Catholic. His father wasn't Catholic, but he converted for Paula von Preradović (the mother of Hanna Molden's husband who had written the text of the Austrian national anthem). Church was important and my mother-in-law was obviously deeply religious. They didn't go to church at every opportunity, but they did have a deep inner spirituality. My husband never questioned it; it was simply a part of his life. As he got older and sicker, it became increasingly important to him. Since we lived in the countryside in Tyrol, we went to church every Sunday. He was already in a wheelchair then and it was difficult, but it was important to him. I also noticed that it comforted him greatly. I am his fourth wife and we had a civil wedding ceremony, and his third wife died late in his life. They had married in church and her death had touched him very deeply, although they weren't in contact with each other. It was clear to me that something was bothering him. He was already more than 80 years-old by that time. One day I said, 'Dearest, should we get married?' and he said 'Yes'. I will never forget the expression on his face. We got married in the Franciscan boarding school in Hall, where our sons went to school – without telling them.

Wallner: In other words, not long ago?

Molden: That was twelve years ago – he was 82 when we got married. Initially, we didn't tell our children. The marriage touched him deeply and reassured him. I don't attend church regularly, but I do enjoy going when I'm in the countryside. When the weather is nice, I walk there, and the priest is always delighted to see me. The view from my house is spectacular; each day I am surrounded by the most natural scenery. You can sense that there is something there that touches you in a way that cannot be explained.

Wallner: Do you believe religion connects or divides people?

Molden: It depends where a person's religiousness *is seated*, so to speak. Many people experience religion in their mind rather than in their gut, and that can often lead to division.

Wallner: What role did the Catholic church play for you and how did it develop?

Molden: In this country, it's been quite positive – but, as we all know, the fish rots from the head down. In the past, Austrian ecclesiastical history has had to deal with some very dubious individuals. However, the current cardinal, Schönborn, is essentially an independent spirit. He has this kind of open-mindedness that helps put the Church in a more positive light. I would never leave the Church. By paying church tax, I am not only supporting the Church per se, but also a cultural institution that has provided us with remarkable buildings. That's why I actually like paying church tax. Well, I mean, who likes to pay – but I do pay the tax willingly. And I would like to add something else, but it's a personal belief: The Church in Austria needs support because of the increasing number of very religious Muslims. It is much better if there is an equilibrium.

Knowing that my own church is strong and good I can let the others be strong and good as well, right? So, I am very much in favour of strengthening my church.

Wallner: What sort of relationship do your children and grandchildren have with religion and the Catholic church?

Molden: None at all. My sons went to a Catholic boarding school, to the Franciscans, which they all liked. My younger son has left the Church behind him, and my elder son got married in a church, but it doesn't mean anything to him. They are kind and loving to me and say things like: 'Ah, our mother, there she is – off to church again!'

Wallner: And your grandchildren?

Molden: All of my grandchildren want to receive confirmation and all three, especially the youngest, takes her confirmation lessons with her godfather, her uncle, very seriously. This all works, even though he left the church, but at some point, he had a conversation with someone who said: 'That's ridiculous, you were raised Catholic and you know what it's all about.' This type of open-mindedness didn't exist before - a lot has changed in that respect.

Wallner: You have mentioned other religions, in particular, the Muslim religion. Do you think that migration changes the religious landscape of a country?

Molden: In principle, I think: Why not? I remember when my stepfather showed me downtown Vienna and we passed by Judenplatz, where he pointed the synagogue out to me. That was the first time I found out that there was such a thing as a Jewish church. I was about seven or eight years-old then. My stepfather also told me that Jews had their own religion, which was something I never heard at school, as it was something people kept silent about. He also told me that Jews have a different approach to God.

Wallner: Over the decades, how important has religion been in Austria? From the outside, Austria is often regarded as a Catholic country. But everyone has a different experience.

Molden: I believe that religion plays an increasingly minor role. I regret that, because religion can – in the best sense – offer people a spiritual framework. People are exposed to so much and having to comprehend everything with your intellect is difficult, especially for those who don't know where life is leading them. In this situation, any kind of belief can be helpful. Even esoterism can help people to find their way; but having no belief system at all is bad, it is dangerous.

Wallner: Let's go back to your childhood and youth. Do you still remember your first day of school?

Molden: That was a wonderful day. The three of us went to primary school, accompanied by my mother. The dog in our house (where we lived together with my grandmother and my aunt) loved us; he was a German Shepherd and always howled when we left. School was quite far away by foot and the moment we entered the classroom we heard this terrible howling outside the front of our school. The dog had

followed us. The teacher said: 'One of you must take the dog back home.' We had a fight about who would be allowed to take the dog home. That was my first day at school.

Wallner: What did a typical school day look like for you?

Molden: I can't really remember my first school days in first grade. My primary school was in the seventh district and my secondary school was in the eighth district. Primary school started at 8 am and we had classes for up to four hours; maybe one hour longer in fourth grade. Then you ran home, had lunch, did your homework and then went out to play in the park or somewhere else. And then, for eight years, secondary school was the centre of the universe. It was shaped by all sorts of different teacher personalities; some of these teachers you revered, others you didn't get along with at all. Some who still had a touch of the 19th-century attitude still lingering in their genes, and others who were very progressive. We experienced all of these during that time.

Wallner: Did you go to a coeducational school?

Molden: No, that didn't exist back then. I remember that my elder son went to a private school in Vienna's first district, the Schottengymnasium (for many years, it was a boys school). Then we went bankrupt and had to give up everything including the house and many other things. The house in Tyrol that we later moved into had been a gift from my husband. The teachers were often angry at my son Ernst because he was a rebellious child. He is still like that. Thank God he is. My son said, 'If all of you are going into exile, then I will too.' To him it was like 'going into exile'. We declared bankruptcy in May and left soon after that, not least because the reports in the media were so terrible. We were advised to enrol our children in the Franciscan school in Hall. The school was a huge building with a garden and a football field. We walked through the school with the priest during break time and all the children were running out of their classrooms. Suddenly, my son beamed with delight and said, 'Mother, there are girls here, I'm staying!'.

Wallner: What memories do you have of your geography class? Which countries were discussed?

Molden: What a question – I'm an old lady now, you don't seriously think I can remember what we talked about in my geography class? I do have the impression that we heard something about what was going on in the world. On a globe, our teacher showed us where countries were located. I do remember the name of my geography teacher, but I couldn't say how much of my geographical knowledge I owe to her.

Wallner: I'm interested to know if, at that time, Europe was important as a continent?

Molden: The neighbouring countries, yes – but not as a common European continent. Of course, we had heard the name 'Europe' and the bull in Greek mythology. But, no, actually it was not conveyed to us as a continent.

Wallner: And when did you grasp that Europe was a union, one that Austria was not a part of until 1995?

Molden: I only realized that this was the case when I went to university.

Wallner: What did it feel like not to be part of this union?

Molden: It didn't affect me at first, but when it all started – Austria's efforts to join the EU – I wanted to be a part of it.

Wallner: What languages did you learn at school?

Molden: English and Latin, plus French as an elective course, but I didn't learn much French. Later on, I learned the hard way when I spent half a year in France.

Wallner: When did you know that you wanted to study at a university?

Molden: I knew because my stepfather never doubted that I would go to university. I wasn't stupid! I was in my senior year when I was asked, 'What do you want to do later on?' That's when, for the first time, I said I wanted to become a journalist. My father made it clear to me that I need to know a lot more about the profession and made an appointment with his acquaintance, Mr. Russ-Bovelino. When I met him, he said, 'Young lady, you want to work as a journalist? I have to tell you one thing – that is not the right profession for a woman. No, that's not good. You have to consider what will happen to you – every editor in chief will want to sleep with you.' So then I considered becoming a diplomat and studied political science. That was the most pointless thing in the world because you learned a little bit about everything, some business law, some international law, and some commercial law. But it was not a well-grounded education. In the end, you had to write a dissertation and you weren't prepared for that either. The early access to scientific study – something that my grandchildren have today – didn't exist back then.

When I started my dissertation, I approached my international law professor, who asked me: 'What would you like to write your dissertation on?' And I answered: 'China'. He said: 'But child, what in China do you want to write about?' And I said: 'About why Red China is so isolated.' China has always fascinated me. Then I went to Professor Zemanek, at that time a young international law professor and quite an arrogant man (and now is no longer with us). He made all of his students write their dissertations about Austrian neutrality because it served his own purposes. He wasn't happy that I wanted to write about China. I managed to assert myself, but it was unbelievably difficult; I had lots of fights with him.

Wallner: I wonder how you were able to do research on China without Google?

Molden: It was terrible. At the time, he asked me if I would be able to spend a year in Geneva year to study all the documents available there. Then, someone told me there was also an archive in Vienna with all the UN documentation. But, in the end, I wasn't able to cite any exciting stories and my dissertation was a disappointedly dull read.

Wallner: Have you ever been to China?

Molden: No, but I am planning to go there. My last novel ends in China – without me having ever been there. But I want to go. I want to visit Jinan. I was once close to the

border, in North Vietnam. At the time, I wanted to cross the border then, but it wasn't possible.

Wallner: You made me curious when you mentioned Paris earlier. Were you abroad during your university years?

Molden: It is a stupid story. I had met somebody at a reception who worked for the UN in Geneva and helped me get a job in the autumn. Nothing special, but at least I would have had a foot in the door. But I had no feedback from my doctoral supervisor, Zemanek, about my dissertation. And then, on the last date I could have submitted the work, he didn't stick to the deadline he gave for assessing it, and that's when I made a mistake: I called him and yelled at him: 'What kind of a professor are you? You don't care about your students. Why are you screwing everything up instead of helping me? All you want is for everyone to write about neutrality.' Then he replied: 'Are you finished now?' I said 'Yes.' A few days later his assistant called and said: 'You can come and pick up his evaluation.' The professor had written that 'the work is, in fact, well structured, but it needs to be completely revised. You can resubmit your work in half a year, at the earliest.' The job was gone, the work wasn't finished, all I wanted to do was to give up. I thought, I'm not doing this anymore! But one of my fellow students said to me, 'Are you crazy, you're so close to the finish line. Don't give him the satisfaction.' I revised my work, handed it to the assistant, and then went to Paris.

Wallner: And how long did you stay?

Molden: Three quarters of a year. By then, the professor had approved my dissertation and I returned to Vienna for my final viva. In the meantime, I had become engaged to a man in France. It was wild because I couldn't speak French, but I thought I'd find a job easily. A friend of mine who knew France well, said: 'You have to place an ad in the Herald Tribune and let people know what your skills are. 'Young Austrian, fluent in English and German.' Several companies contacted me, one of them being Marcel Boussac, a huge fashion company. I had to prove that I could do what I had claimed. A man called Monsieur Giro said, '*Mademoiselle, alors prenet un dictat!*' and I had to sit at the typewriter while he began to dictate. Slowly. First an English text that was almost incomprehensible. It is, after all, hard to understand a Frenchman speaking English. That went well, but then came the French text. I didn't understand a word he said. I typed everything phonetically. Later, he said that even though I had made numerous mistakes, it was satisfactory for the time being. I got the job; everyone was really nice to me, even though I was still unable to record dictations. I was only there for my English skills. But it was fun, and I had a great time working for Marcel Boussac.

Wallner: What was your first real profession then?

Molden: I never really had one. I got engaged in France and then returned to Vienna, did my final viva the day after the final examination, and met the publisher Fritz Molden at a party. When I came home that evening, I called my fiancée and told him that I couldn't marry him. *C'est fini*. I had fallen in love with someone else. We only had eight weeks until our wedding and I had no idea how everything would ever work out. In any

case, Molden immediately asked if we could meet again the day after our first meeting. But I didn't know if things would work out the way I wanted. All I knew was that since I had fallen head over heels in love with someone else, then I could not commit to marriage.

At the time, I worked for Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi [the founder of the Paneuropean-Union and Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi's uncle]. I helped to put his office in order. He was one of the most good-looking individuals I had ever seen. I was asked to help organise a Paneuropean conference. I met the oddest characters; it was like another world. For example, every week I received a handwritten letter addressed to Richard. Tiny blue envelopes with fine writing, with the name 'De Gaulle' as the sender on the back. I organised a conference for Coudenhove-Kalergi and then, in no time, I was married. After that, I first had to settle into my new life with Fritz Molden.

Wallner: Which year are we talking about now?

Molden: 1966. He was already a publisher by then, but his media company hadn't been sold yet. But he still had his printing companies. During this time, he earned a lot of money with his printing companies, but it bored him. 'I have to do something', he said. Gerd Bacher visited him [*Gerd Bacher, 1925-2015, later Director General of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation, ORF and a major media producer, who started his career with Molden*] and they decided to found a publishing company. Then they visited the Frankfurt Book Fair and asked the big publishers about how to they could publish books. All of them said: These two fools from Austria, this is completely ridiculous. They were a laughingstock. The following year, the Molden Verlag took part in the book fair, and two years after that, on the way to the Frankfurt Book Fair, huge banners with the words 'Knowledge is power, read a Molden book' were hanging everywhere. By that time, he was dominating the industry. He was a PR genius.

Wallner: Which authors did he publish?

Molden: It was a colourful mixture in the beginning: He purchased a lot from the USA. He asked lots of his journalist friends to write a book. One of them, Ernst Trost (journalist for the *Kronen Zeitung*), wrote a beautiful book about the Danube River. Or Andrics? Otto Schulmeister. Everyone was amazed.

Wallner: But was it clear to you at the time that you would settle in and put your own professional career on the back burner?

Molden: I wasn't thinking about my job. To be honest, if you come from such a comfortable bourgeois background as I did, where everything is manageable – and then you are thrown into a new world that is completely different – that is really difficult. My mother was very wise in this respect when she said to me: 'Look at everything carefully first.' I made sure everything worked out and that I could belong there. When I still lived with my parents, we never had more than six guests in our house, maybe three, four or five times a year. But at the Molden residence in Erocagasse [the Viennese address], there was a set meal every other day as well as cocktail receptions which drew in 100 people five times a month. These are all things you had to learn to

deal with. It wasn't much fun. But as soon as I mastered it, it was OK. And then I got bored. Our second child had been born and there was an age difference of six years between our two sons – and I was eager to do something new.

My husband noticed my mood and asked me, 'What do you want to do?' He offered many different things, like working in a gallery or similar things. I wanted none of that. One day he said he had a book to translate and asked me whether I would like to help. I began to translate books for him. The first book was '*Bread Upon the Waters*' by Irwin Shaw. And more books followed. I really enjoyed my work. One day, the editor-in-chief of '*Wochenpresse*' approached me [his name was Magenschab] and he asked me: 'Would you write a column for us?' I was stunned. They assumed that someone who could translate would be able to write. They wanted me to write a column about social life because I attended so many cocktails and dinners. But I told them that's out of the question – I would never write about celebrities or about something where I had been privately invited. I'm not going to do that. When he asked me what I would be prepared to do, I said profile pieces on people known all over town ['*bunte Hunde*']. Then I began to write the profile pieces and I earned a lot of money, more than I had ever earned at Molden. Shortly afterwards, we lived off of my income.

Wallner: In 1982, your husband went bankrupt. We already mentioned earlier that the bankruptcy resulted in the loss of your house in Vienna and your move to Alpbach in Tyrol. How did you deal with all of that?

Molden: You mean the collapse of everything? It was unbelievable, because nobody thought that it would really come to this. It was very bizarre. The bankruptcy was filed in May and sometime in February my husband and I went out for dinner. I had broken my leg in a ski accident, and he asked me: 'Do you know what bankruptcy is?' 'Of course, I know what bankruptcy is.' And he said: 'But do you know what happens if someone goes bankrupt?' Then he explained to me in great detail what happens if someone goes broke. And he added 'We're in trouble and it could happen.' And then it really happened. That was ugly, and then the banks contacted us, but at that point, everything was already pawned. Then the bank directors showed up and said, 'Excuse me, Madame, we are going to have to strip the paintings off the walls.' As my husband was no longer around, I did all of it on my own. At the same time, his 23-year old daughter had died. That was terrible, and his brother, Otto Molden, immediately took him straight back to Alpbach. And my mother picked our children up from boarding school and took them to the countryside. I handled the entire bankruptcy process and, you have to imagine, one day this guy turns up with a young woman to record everything. He kept saying: 'Young lady, write.' 'Well, what do we have here. Writing desk, possibly antique.'

Wallner: But you lived off of your income. Did you have to support the family?

Molden: Actually, yes! I had to steer the ship. My husband was devastated. There was nothing left, he was no longer able to support us. At some point he said, 'I'd rather shoot myself. He even had a gun and I said, 'OK, wonderful, go and shoot yourself, but I'm not going to shed any tears. You can't just abandon us. Not now.' He turned

around and got to work. That was unbelievably courageous of him, he was 58 and had to start over again. Bruno Kreisky (the former Austrian Chancellor and Socialist leader from 1970 to 1983) wanted to support my husband, but Hannes Androsch (the former Socialist Finance Minister) not so much. There was a conflict between Kreisky and Androsch. Maybe Androsch didn't have anything against my husband, but he wanted to prevail. Kreisky tried to make my husband the boss of the Cultural Institute in New York. But the Institute was led by one of my husband's friends and he said he would never accept the offer; he couldn't take the job away from a friend. But then Hugo Portisch [a famed Austrian journalist] needed help with his TV series about contemporary Austrian history and my husband did a lot of research work for him. He then came up with the idea for the film series *On Red-White-Red Traces* which featured reports about Austrians living abroad. At some point, he was in New York and met Oskar Bronner, whom he knew very well. My husband believed that Austria's newspaper landscape was inferior and felt that Ossi should not be wasting his talents painting in New York but should rather found a newspaper.

And that's exactly what happened. The *Standard* was founded, and for three years, my husband was in charge of evaluating the paper's content. Every day – I still remember it vividly - he got up at 3 am and left the house at 4 am, went to the editorial office, read all newspapers, made clippings and presented it all to Ossi. His work was extremely well-paid. And then he set up another publishing company.

Wallner: How important was politics in your life – during your childhood, your life with your husband and even today?

Molden: As a young girl, only to the extent that it affected my studies. I gathered as much information as I needed, but I was never passionate about politics. But living alongside a man like Fritz Molden made it impossible to avoid politics. It was not until he fell ill and became weaker that I started to form my own opinions. After his death, I no longer had someone to challenge. I couldn't discuss my ideas with anyone. It was terrible. But I can now call a very close friend of my husband's, who has a similar understanding of history and politics, and ask him about his opinion on certain issues. That makes me feel much better.

Wallner: Paula Preradovic is your husband's mother. She wrote the lyrics to Austria's national anthem (*'Land der Berge, Land am Strome, Land der Äcker, Land der Dome, Land der Hämmer, zukunftsreich! / Land of mountains, land by the river, land of fields, land of cathedrals, land of hammers, with a promising future!'*) Did this play a role in her son's –your husband's – life?

Molden: The national anthem was not very important to him, so it didn't play the main role. It must have been the atmosphere in his family home, a Biedermeier house. His family owned a house in Vienna's Osterleitengasse (in the 19th district) and everyone who was interested in literature, politics and history met here. That is how Otto and Fritz grew up. Of course, his mother played an important role, she read poems – but they only laughed about the national anthem. They even composed a humorous version of it – which involved their mother on the piano whilst they sang: *'Land der*

Erbesen, Land der Bohnen, Land der vier alliierten Zonen, wir verkaufen dich im Schleich. (Land of peas, land of beans, land of four allied zones, we will sell you on the black market') Actually it is amusing, because Strache (Heinz-Christian Strache, the former leader of the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) who was removed from office after the Ibiza scandal) would have also sold us on the black market. It really wasn't the national anthem, but their parents who shaped them. And they were very proud of their mother.

Wallner: What political orientation defined you and your husband?

Molden: My husband was definitely liberal. However, he always voted for the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) – mainly because there was no other party that interested him or corresponded with his view of the world. In contrast, I was rebellious and sometimes voted for someone else. Something that was extremely important to him was the so-called 'social partnership' (*Sozialpartnerschaft* – a system of co-operation between employer and employee associations). He considered it essential that the country had this 'social partnership', something that, as far as I know, does not exist anywhere else.

Wallner: For several years now, it's not just the sons but also the 'daughters' who are an integral part of the national anthem. What was your husband's view on this?

Molden: This topic came up in our house in Alpbach when Maria Rauch-Kallat (the former minister for women's affairs) came to visit. She took Fritz aside and asked him how he would feel if 'daughters' were included in the anthem. At first, he laughed but then said you should not mess around with a literary piece of work; however, if it was of real concern to her, then she should go ahead and try it out – and she actually went through with it. All of us found it fairly insignificant at the time. Time and time again, my son, Ernst, is asked about his opinion on this topic and he always answers that the national anthem is not the best text his grandmother wrote, but I think it's complete nonsense because there are so many things you would have to change in order to improve it. What about 'La Marseillaise'? It's ridiculous – in my opinion, it only had to do with vote-catching. Whenever the national anthem is sung, I stubbornly stick to 'sons'.

Wallner: Do you sometimes have the opportunity to sing the European anthem?

Molden: Yes, every once in a while.

Wallner: And what do you feel when you sing it?

Molden: The melody alone moves me very deeply - I consider it a masterpiece.

Wallner: Do you consider yourself a European? If someone asks you where you come from, what do tell them?

Molden: Absolutely. I tell them I'm an Austrian and a European.

Wallner: Do you remember what it was like to travel in the old days?

Molden: I still remember it vividly. It was insane. For example, when you came from Bolzano you were scared someone would discover the salami you had bought. Or

shoes from Italy - a disaster! And the delays. Especially my husband – he never forgot that in those days there were borders. Today, I don't even think about that anymore. I only get upset when I drive through the so-called Deutsche Eck ('German Corner') and the Bavarians make a fuss. To jeopardize something like that, to jeopardize freedom of movement, – Migrants or not – there's got to be another solution other than closing or guarding borders again. It seems like a failure. I know this comes across as incredibly naïve, but I hope the European Union will become a real powerhouse, not in the military sense, but as a moral authority. It should be a single united entity – but that doesn't imply that the individual member states cannot do things at a national level.

Wallner: Did your life change after Austria became an EU member in 1995?

Molden: Not abruptly. But there was this tremendous joy over the fact that it had happened. Our entire family was so proud that the Austrians were not stupid and didn't vote for the wrong thing. That could have also happened. In fact, there was an immediate awareness of being European. Of course, this was due to the fact that our family was so steeped into history and always saw the bigger picture. None of our family members were nationalist. They were, and always had been, liberals and forward-thinking. My mother came from Croatia and my father-in-law's family originally came from Moldavia. My grandmother came from Poland and my grandfather from Bohemia. So we all believed that everything was ok once again!

Wallner: Over the course of your life, which country besides Austria has been the most important to you?

Molden: Of course, this is tied closely tied to having a real interest in another country. For me, that was undoubtedly France because I worked there and because everything in France got under my skin. No holiday resorts, no places that were superficial. It was where I lived, where I bought my books, where my friends lived. I had never lived anywhere else for such a long period of time. You have to live somewhere in order to say that it is really important to you.

Wallner: Did you have any bad experiences while traveling?

Molden: The most threatening thing to me was the zonal border in my childhood – the bridge over the Enns river. It is one of those traumatic stories that will stick with me forever. My mother and I were on our way to the Salzkammergut for a holiday when we encountered the Russians at the bridge. As a child, I felt threatened by the Russians. The train stopped for a long time and then the Russian soldiers boarded the train and asked everyone to show their IDs. We were in one of these large old-fashioned train compartments. A couple was sitting near my mother and I and they were very tense, constantly turning their eyes left and right. They were scared. Then the Russians came, looked at their papers, and one of them kept on checking the man's ID and said 'You – come!' He got up, disappeared and didn't return. The train was stopped for ages. It was summer and the tracks were overgrown with grass on the sides. Nobody was talking on the train, everyone seemed to be paralyzed with fear. I kept on looking at the grass swaying in the wind and wondering if the train would

ever start moving again. My mother made sure I was quiet. Suddenly, the train started to move, but the man never returned. I will never forget the woman. She just sat there; first, she quietly began to gasp and then she started to cry. When the train was going full speed, she screamed and screamed. It was horrifying! Then my mother took her in her arms. That was a border experience – although the border was in the middle of Austria. It was terrifying.

Wallner: Which book influenced you the most?

Molden: Many! From some, I learned historical facts, as was the case with *Gone with the Wind*, some parts of which I can recite from memory. I love Stefan Zweig's *The World of Yesterday*. Today, one of my favourite authors is Ferdinand Schirach. He is wonderful, a fantastic writer. He uses clear and beautiful language.

Wallner: And which film?

Molden: '*The Third Man*'.

Wallner: That's a real classic, I assume many of our European listeners know the film. And which artists?

Molden: Now this gives away how old I am, but I had the opportunity to see the Burgtheater actor Raoul Aslan on stage. Even Werner Krauss and Oskar Werner – I saw all of them. There comes a time when you think nobody can live up to them. But that's not true. Today, I also have favourite actors. For example, Nicholas Ofczarek. It's an unbelievable joy to watch him play his roles. As for musicians, I like Franz Welster-Möst; and my son, Ernst Molden (who is a singer). He writes all of his songs himself and they all get under my skin. I love him dearly. But not for advertising reasons, naturally.

Wallner: Are there things you consider to be typically European?

Molden: The awareness that Europe exists. That in itself is essential. These days, every schoolchild knows that Europe exists. We are all in Europe. This awareness has not been around for long. Of course, I don't travel enough to know if it is also the case in Romania, for example. In any case, people are conscious of its existence and that is good.

Wallner: How do you feel about growing old in this Europe?

Molden: I would very much like to witness what it will be like in 20 years. I won't be around then, but I'd love to know. I am curious to see how Ursula van der Leyen will deal with it. I'm not usually in favour of the idea of having 'women at any price', I prefer to follow my own mantra of 'together, everything works out well'. But the fact that a woman is now President of the Commission is pretty good. Women tackle problems differently and even if they also make mistakes, they have a different attitude towards power.

Wallner: Do you recall when you first watched television?

Molden: Rather late. I knew that TV sets existed. I must have been 12 or 13 and was at a school friend's house. I was fascinated and asked if we could have a TV at home

as well. My father loved reading newspapers. He said that's sufficient, as you can go much deeper with reading and if he wanted to see a movie he could go to the cinema. I was a university student by the time my parents bought a TV.

Wallner: When did you get your first mobile phone?

Molden: In this apartment we had a land line on the wall and I still remember the number today. Everyone listened when my suitors called. Mobile phone? Much later! I would say, perhaps 12 years ago. My husband never wanted one.

Wallner: And what about a computer?

Molden: I started to work for the *Wochenpresse* in 1982 and I got a computer shortly after that. Later, I had a laptop and also had a tablet which I gave to my grandchild. I actually only use Word.

Wallner: Which day of the year is most important to you?

Molden: Thank God, these highlights alternate and are unpredictable. But there are, of course, the traditional celebrations where the family comes together – and that's predominantly at Christmas time. We all try to make sure that we are together. When my mother was still with us, it was a steady ritual. My husband also loved Christmas. What is interesting is that after my husband passed away, my sons started to do certain things they had always mocked him for.

Wallner: What are your memories of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989?

Molden: Incredibly liberating – wonderful. Speaking of the fall, to me, the Velvet Revolution [the Czech revolution] was even more exciting. At that time, my son, Ernst, worked for '*Die Presse*' and I was working for one of those glossy magazines – it was either *Cosmopolitan* or *Marie Claire*. My son was staying somewhere in Czechoslovakia and the magazine had booked a room for me in a hotel. Unbelievable. It was pure poetry. This sleepy, slowly blossoming country. My son and I met in the evening – he was researching his story and I was researching mine. I had a wonderful guide who was recommended by a family friend, Prince Schwarzenberg – one of his uncles showed me around town. The merging of centuries-old stories: narratives about life under communist rule and what it was like. My son heard totally different stories and that evening, we met and walked around in search of 'ena vurt' and 'ena biera'. While eating and drinking on a street corner, we exchanged our impressions and observed that people had such expectant glances – as if they were now able to breathe again after enduring so many decades under pressure. That was great.

Wallner: What was your experience with regard to the wave of refugees fleeing from Hungary in 1956?

Molden: Ah, I was actively involved – I was 16 and the head girl at school. Everything that was going on affected us deeply and I called a meeting to discuss what we could do. It was clear to us that we would make donations with the help of our parents, but the problem is always that you never know where the donations actually end up. My suggestion was to select a single family that we could support. I enquired about who

could act as the point of contact. We found a family with parents, grandparents and three little children who wanted to emigrate to Canada to join their relatives. We organized an apartment for them, brought them food and took care of them until they were able to travel on to Canada. Austria was really great at the time. During the wave of refugees in 2015, I often thought about what it about us that has changed so that we are no longer able to help... which is actually not entirely true. One of my sons and my daughter-in-law supported a Syrian family in the same way I did. Others went to the Westbahnhof train station and distributed clothes. It's not like no one helped.

Wallner: But in comparison, what was your experience with the wave of refugees in 2015. You've talked about children who helped. But apart from that, how would you describe the atmosphere?

Molden: It hurts when people whom you really like have a completely different opinion on this issue. It's useless to start fighting with them, because they don't want to change their mind. It's a bit like a question of faith, it's almost religious. 'We are being overrun', 'Our culture is being destroyed'. That's so stupid! Cultures have always moved. The entire history of the Habsburgs is a mishmash – that's ridiculous. What do we want? Preserve the pure Austrian blood? That makes me laugh, really. There is no bigger mishmash.

Wallner: Did you always feel free to do what you wanted to do? Not just politically, but also socially.

Molden: The only limits are within me.

Wallner: Were there moments when you missed that freedom?

Molden: Of course, there were such moments. I was 70 not that long ago: I had three people in a row who were in need of care. First, my mother, who lived with us and who died aged 97. Then my husband became weaker and weaker until he could no longer walk and needed nursing care. While his cognitive abilities were perfect to the very end, his body was a wreck. And after that I had a friend who was completely alone – one of the most brilliant women I have ever met in my life. She had Alzheimer's disease and I was her trustee. For a while, I believed I would suffocate. I didn't know how to carry on. But you can – again and again.

Wallner: Did you have the feeling that you couldn't do what you wanted because you were a woman or an Austrian?

Molden: No, neither as a woman, nor because of belonging to any particular country. I was very fortunate. Only if you yourself set clear boundaries, or if your boundaries are set within the family, or if barriers arise from circumstances you cannot cross for moral reasons.

Wallner: What is your view on women who wear a headscarf for religious reasons? What is your attitude in this respect?

Molden: It's part of their faith, part of their way of living. But it's not good if it is forced upon them... But I don't think it's correct to try to control the wearing of headscarves.

In the long run that's counterproductive. Let's assume a young woman says, 'I don't want to wear a headscarf', but her parents want her to wear one – and suddenly it's prohibited by the state. Then things become problematic. The calmer and more relaxed you are, the better it is.

Wallner: As a young person, how did you feel about the future?

Molden: Completely worry-free!

Wallner: Even though your early experiences were so traumatic?

Molden: Yes, they were traumatic, but then everything got brighter. During my childhood, my stepfather gave me a strong sense of security. He was as pharmacist - and pharmacies stood for safety. Above all, he was a wonderful person. Everything then seemed to be on the right track and our lives became easier and better. Of course, I still remember what hunger felt like, but suddenly hunger was no longer an issue. We became richer and more comfortable. Everything was continuously going uphill. From my perspective, we only reached this peak 15 years ago. That's when we thought, 'Could things get any better than this?'. But then fierce armed conflicts started. Anyone who had ever experienced war was concerned. I know many young people who have never heard the sound of a bomb dropping. Imagine a country like Syria that is constantly exposed to a hail of bombs; not to mention atrocities or ISIS – just war. That's something that really gets under your skin. Admittedly, all this is happening far away while our country lives in peace and we are doing well, but that's when you become aware of how blessed we are – that it is not happening here. When the Balkan War broke out everything suddenly seemed much closer. Until then, I had lived without any fear. At present, I believe my grandchildren's generation will be able to master this world, I think they will manage. But also, I think that the world will move away from those 50 to 90 years of things going forward, of peace, and that nothing will happen. We actually all live in a kind of paradise.

Wallner: What do you personally consider important to pass on to your children and grandchildren?

Molden: To stand behind them – totally and unconditionally. I think that's what's most important to pass on to others. Giving them the feeling they are doing fine. Because they have parents they can learn from. And then there's grandmothers. I know that my mother was extremely important for my sons. Grandma (Omama) was an icon. I used to travel a lot, accompanying my husband on countless trips – he expected that of me – and of course, it was clear to my children how much I was away. But Grandma was always there for them. That's why I believe grandparents play a very important role – I know that not everyone is lucky enough to have grandparents, but they are important. My grandchildren, for example, greatly regret not having their grandfather anymore, especially now that they're old enough to soak up his profound historical knowledge. But it's not something you can impose on them; they have to want this on their own.

Wallner: What was the most unexpected turn of events in your life?

Molden: The bankruptcy. When your existence is destroyed overnight, it really takes it out of you. But, to be honest, I was able to handle it.

Wallner: Which of today's issues or developments did you least expect to happen, especially taking into account everything you have talked about so far?

Molden: Firstly, the huge wave of migration going far beyond what is happening in Syria. What's going on in the Middle East is a war – but the massive wave of migration from Africa? It reminds me of a film that aired on the BBC about 25 years ago called *The March*. The film is about a famine in Africa and an entire tribe that migrates north, with more and more people joining along the way. An amazing woman working for the UN keeps trying to warn officials that something drastic is happening, but no one listens to her. Then the march starts and finally thousands of African people reach the Moroccan coast and start to make their way over to Europe in boats. By the time the first boats reach Spain, everyone who owned a beautiful house on the coast has left. You can see a huge barbed wire fence and soldiers everywhere. Well, this is the type of march that is currently happening. We deal with everything else: Afghanistan, Syria, everything coming from the Northern Hemisphere is manageable. But when people from the Southern Hemisphere start to migrate because of climate change... what should these people do? They want to survive - so of course they leave before they die like flies in their own country. In my eyes, this is the greatest challenge facing Europe today.

Wallner: In your opinion, what is the biggest mistake you and your generation have made in recent decades?

Molden: Instead of 'us being mistaken', I think I would rather say 'things we weren't able to predict'. I don't think 'mistaken' is the correct term here. The incidents that happened were completely unforeseeable and mainly happened because not enough attention was given to certain developments or perhaps because they really were unpredictable. From a political perspective, for example, individual politicians can be wrong, but actually 'error' is linguistically not the correct term. I would rather call it an undesirable development; on second thought, an undesirable development is also not correct. It's a linguistic issue. But it is definitely not a mistake.

Wallner: Maybe, more simply, one should call it an 'attitude' instead – was there anything that you feel you had the wrong attitude towards at the time? Taking into account what you have just said – it was your own generation that experienced this upswing, where things got better and better – your attitude therefore stood in contrast to this backlash, this change of direction. But it has to be said that an upswing followed after a short crisis - with technical, medical and other developments taking place, and these developments continue to this day. Therefore, it is all the more remarkable that society feels as if this was not the case and is anxious.

Molden: From my 'average girl' perspective – I really have no clue about economics - but emotionally, and this may seem trivial, I believe that if a group continuously becomes richer and richer and the gap becomes wider, that it isn't a positive development. It's a development we will all suffer from for a long time. And it affects

almost all areas: economics, our survival, the survival of nature and of each individual. That is an undesirable development. Not a mistake, but simply a development, which, in my opinion, will one day blow up in our faces.

Wallner: When this gap you refer to continues to become wider?

Molden: Yes.

Wallner: You have already mentioned that one of the biggest challenges facing Europe is the migration issue. Do you believe that Europe, as it stands today, is prepared to cope with this?

Molden: As long as each individual EU member country continues to protect its own nationality and is unwilling to alter their agenda so that it could encompass the 'big picture', I don't see any scenario where the situation can be brought under control. All this babbling about 'establishing an infrastructure in African countries' – where is any of this really happening? And if it is happening, it's only individual initiatives such as World Vision building wells in Eritrea or building a school. But that alone won't be enough. Europe should send a human 'super weapon', someone so fascinating that he or she can captivate everyone. I don't know if Ursula von der Leyen is such a person, I don't know. Someone who can make everyone aware that this is a chance for Europe. Someone who makes all of this transparent. All the arguments brought forth by Eurosceptics – such as the superiority of the officials and the wheeling and dealing behind closed doors about who gets which job, and the indecisiveness – someone has to weed all of that out.

Wallner: A few years ago – during the time when Austria joined the EU – would you have ever thought a member country would consider leaving the Union?

Molden: We would have never considered it; I would have never considered it. Even if time and again there was talk about it in Austria. But now, everyone clearly sees what the United Kingdom is faced with – and that's no small matter.

Wallner: Have you ever taken part in a demonstration?

Molden: I've participated in small protests – against the planned building development of a streambed, for example. Today I can see that my grandchildren are, at least in spirit, part of Greta's movement.

Wallner: Is there anything you would protest against on the streets today? If yes, what would that be?

Molden: If Mr. Kickl decided to reintroduce the death penalty. When the first person was sentenced to death I would take to the streets – even if I was the only person protesting.

Wallner: Have you ever had the feeling that you were not allowed to speak out against something? Or that you were afraid of speaking your mind?

Molden: Never out of fear! If I was, then it was only out of consideration for others. With regard to political or social statements, it is necessary to take the feelings of

others into consideration – at least that’s what I do. If I think my words would hurt someone, I don’t say anything, and I just keep it to myself.

Wallner: What I actually meant was if there were any political reasons that would keep you from speaking out?

Molden: I don’t hold back during political debates. My husband used to say that I should hold myself back and shouldn’t get so upset and that I tend to lose my cool. And that’s true.

Wallner: Have you ever had enemies in your life?

Molden: Do I have enemies? Yes, I probably do. Enemies – I’m sure I have some, but they haven’t revealed themselves as such. (chuckles)

Wallner: Your son, Ernst, once said in an interview it was interesting to see that suddenly, after the bankruptcy, how many people turned their backs on you.

Molden: Yes, but those aren’t enemies, that’s just maliciousness. Actually, they have condemned themselves. I wouldn’t even consider them as enemies. They were simply sleazy characters.

Wallner: What do you think Europe will be like in 50 years, in 2070?

Molden: By that time, I’ll be long dead – unpredictable.

Wallner: What about Austria?

Molden: AEIOU

You know, don’t you? – this was often cited by Emperor Maximilian’s Father - *Austria erit in orbe ultima* – Austria will always exist, at least in some way or another.

Wallner: What hopes do you have for your grandchildren in today’s Europe and today’s Austria?

Molden: I hope that they can help shape Europe. Currently, Europe does not give an individual the feeling that he or she can make a difference, which I consider to be a significant weakness. Here, in Austria, everyone is allowed to vote and has the opportunity to exert some influence. This creates a feeling of responsibility. In Europe, people still don’t have the feeling of being responsible for anything: They believe they have no choice and are forced to accept any decisions that have been made. It is important to enable them to actively participate. Only then will Europe have a future.

Wallner: Assuming that the three large developments: digitalisation, globalization and migration have an enormous influence on Europe - are you worried that this may result in an increasing loss of national identity for the next generation? Digitalisation causes boundaries as well as languages to blur. There has been much moaning about the widespread use of the English language across the globe.

Molden: No, you cannot stop these types of developments. You have to learn how to cope with them, but you cannot stop them. I believe that language is essential. It is absolutely vital to maintain one’s own language. Language is synonymous with identity. Austrian German, for example, has a value in itself. For all I care, someone

can speak all the languages in the world, but you have to have one language for yourself – with which you can express everything that is emotionally important to you. Apart from that, all types of nationalism should be eliminated, they are nonsensical and disruptive. In a world that is increasingly becoming that way - so what? But language is something special – like a mother or a father.

Wallner: Are borders between countries, as they exist today, becoming more important or less important, particularly in a time that is so volatile?

Molden: They should all be abolished!

Wallner: Even if today, they are unfortunately becoming more and more relevant?

Molden: Yes, they should be abolished, completely! At least within Europe. But it also depends in which direction the overall sentiment in Europe is going. I am sure Brexit will have an effect. It may lead Orbán and his comrades to say, 'Let's also leave'. But they aren't stupid, they really aren't stupid. They have much more sinister ideas with regard to their power. But they are definitely not stupid. The economic advantages of a united Europe have definitely manifested in the meantime. If the UK leaves and you can see on the big screen what is happening in the country – that might have a strong effect on Europe: in other words, to collaborate in a positive sense. 'We are not crazy, we're not going to leave, that's out of the question.' If we leave, then we will end up with someone like Boris Johnson. (By the way, he's already getting into trouble, I'm so happy!)

Wallner: Do you think a lot about the future or is that something a person with your maturity no longer does?

Molden: The future... well, let's put it this way: I don't give much thought to what might happen in 40, 50 or 60 years. Once you've reached a certain age, you try to make the best of what you still have. You want to change things and stand up for something as long as you're young and your life is still ahead of you. That's not something you do when you are old, since it's almost no longer possible. But it's important to spend one's 'golden years' with dignity and never to lose sight of the present day. The present is very important. No matter how much you debate about the future, if you cannot deal with the present – well then what the heck are you doing? The EU in 20 years, I know this is somewhat of a utopian idea, but maybe we will then be the leading world power - well, definitely not, but maybe firmly number three, and all member states will agree on every issue and we'll even have a European anthem – but all of this can only materialize if we manage what's happening now.

Wallner: Here is my final question: Do you have a mission or a thought you want to pass on to young Europeans who are currently listening to this interview?

Molden: Yes, I definitely do. This Europe is the only reasonable concept for Europe's future. This is something you have to stick with – what is the alternative? If that really comes true, then one day, after the tension of this millennium has somewhat subsided and the large blocks understand that it's stupid to continue competing against each other and that they should instead form 'one world', it might happen. Of course, I know

this is a utopian idea but, if Europe continues to be made up of individual parts – a country here, another there, arguing about this and that, let's do this and not that – if Europe continues to speak without a unified voice, then Europe will fall apart and one day belong to a different block: All those countries that today still enjoy rebelling against something.

Wallner: Ms Molden, thank you.