

The landlord in Feldthurns was later unable to tell anyone with complete certainty whether the guest in question was Josef Gasser or not. He said that the young man had ordered a pickled calf's head and a glass of rosé, he, the landlord of the inn in the lower part of the village, had noticed this because the young man had drunk only a single glass of wine, but had not touched the calf's head, merely peered at it in a very ostentatious and peculiar manner so that he, the landlord, had asked him whether there was something wrong with the calf's head. However, the young man had not paid the slightest heed to his questions but had ordered a schnapps and had, on his part, begun asking questions about all sorts of different things. According to the landlord he gave the impression, as he did this, of being on the one hand quite cheerful and on the other strangely interested. The landlord said that he was a member of the Feldthurns Cultural Society, that he was president of it, that Castle Velthurns was a unique place of interest and that, in addition to this, Feldthurns also possessed a swimming pool, and that he was only telling him all this because the guest was growing more and more excited as he listened to him. The guest also asked him once, again without any apparent reason, whether the landlord was Catholic. The landlord said that of course he was Catholic, that all the people in the area were Catholic and that he the guest was presumably also Catholic, since he was evidently also from the Eisack valley, and on hearing this the young man's mood became downright enthusiastic. He even clapped his hands. Things went on like this for a while, and then two tourists came in, a German married couple. The guest's face darkened. The tourists ordered bacon and wine, talked about the route they were taking for their vacation, praised the province of South Tyrol and put a guide book on the table. They immediately started up a conversation with the landlord, the sole purpose of which was to demonstrate how knowledgeable they were about, and what an intimate knowledge of, the country they possessed. Above all, they had some very detailed things to say about Venosta. The landlord, however, did not know Venosta at all. You don't know Venosta? asked the two German tourists in astonishment. The landlord said that he came from the Eisack valley not from Venosta. Whereupon the two tourists began to lecture the landlord about Venosta and the collective beauties of South Tyrol. The aforementioned guest said nothing for a while, and sat staring at the table-top with a more and more sullen expression. But then he suddenly started talking himself, but of quite unrelated matters. As he talked he once more waxed strangely enthusiastic . . . He said that, in his view, the country had a healthy mentality, especially as far as development was concerned, that it was not ruined by the government and by environmental protection measures to the same extent as, for instance, Germany and Austria were, at least you were able to build in South Tyrol, for that was the way things were. The world was there for people, after all, and that was how it had to be developed. He was an engineer. He worked at the Cross of Latzfons. Oh! at the Cross

of Latzfons, said the tourist with a knowing look, although he plainly had no knowledge whatsoever of the Cross of Latzfons. The landlord looked at the guest in amazement. Because, naturally, nothing was being built up at the Cross of Latzfons; all that was up there were meadows with a cross placed at the summit . . . The tourist said that in his opinion the beauty of South Tyrol was also its capital asset and this capital should not be destroyed; they came down from Münster by car twice a year and every time they were here they breathed more easily: South Tyrol was like a second home to them. The countryside had to be protected: develop but protect, interjected the tourist's wife. Exactly said her husband. There must be a happy medium. The countryside must be developed but it must also be protected. If there were too much industrial construction the tourists would stop coming. So what was being built up there at the cross? The young guest: A power station was being built. He himself was the engineer of the Latzfons Cross power station. (The landlord told a journalist from the *Eisacktal Tagblatt* three weeks later that the strange guest had said this in the following words, 'Engineer of the power station at the Cross of Latzfons.'). Of course we cannot do without electricity said the tourist. The wife: What would the world be without electricity? Unimaginable, Klaus, if we had no electricity. The conversation went back and forth like this for a while and it became clear to the landlord that the alleged engineer was only saying such absurd things in order to inveigle the tourists into making the most embarrassing statements and self-revelations possible. Everything finished up with the alleged engineer's almost forcing both of the tourists to eat the calf's head. He praised the calf's head as the particular specialty of the house, saying that everyone here ate the calf's head, that you couldn't have been in the landlord's in Feldthurns without having eaten the calf's head, *etcetera*. At the same time the young man himself had up till then never been seen in the

landlord's or even in Feldthurns at all and could not, therefore, possibly know the calf's head from the landlord's kitchen. The couple did in fact order two portions of pickled calf's head to go with their bacon. The landlord had nothing to say about all this. While the supposed Gasser was still sitting in front of his plate without touching it, the Germans ate up the calf's head, an embarrassing

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**—ULRICH GREINER, DIE ZEIT**

situation. Then, according to the landlord, the young man from the Eisack valley left . . . The landlord's mother later insisted that the guest in question was certainly Josef Gasser, she had recognized him immediately, three weeks later, among the pictures in the *Eisacktal Tagblatt* and on the news, and even then as soon as he came into the landlord's she had had a funny feeling. There was something not quite right about him from the beginning. True, she didn't tell the public all this until after the events had already taken place and when she was asked why, if she knew everything so precisely, she had not said something about it before, she simply replied that she had, from the very beginning, said *everything*, but no one had listened to her. ■