

80 YEARS

AFTER

LIBERATION

The Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial Magazine



DEAR READERS!

I am pleased to present the latest issue of the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial Magazine. This new issue takes a critical look at the past while also considering the future of remembrance culture.

On the eve of the 80th anniversary of the liberation, the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial is a lively and multi-faceted remembrance site. Although it was one of the first concentration camp memorials to be established in Europe, it remained on the sidelines of remembrance culture until 1995. Unlike other camps such as Auschwitz, Dachau and Buchenwald, Flossenbürg barely existed in the public consciousness. Large parts of the site had been repurposed and traces of the former camp were deliberately altered or destroyed. Over the last 30 years, this forgotten site has been transformed into a memorial that does justice to Flossenbürg's international significance – an achievement that would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of many people. I would like to express my sincere and deep gratitude to all of them.

However, this 80th anniversary should also be a reminder that we must not tolerate the growing number of people around the world who are questioning democracy, freedom and diversity and exploiting history for their own purposes. It is up to us to defend the values of our free democratic basic order every day anew. This is what the Bavarian Memorial Foundation and the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial with all of their employees stand for.

Karl Freller
Director of the Bavarian Memorial Foundation



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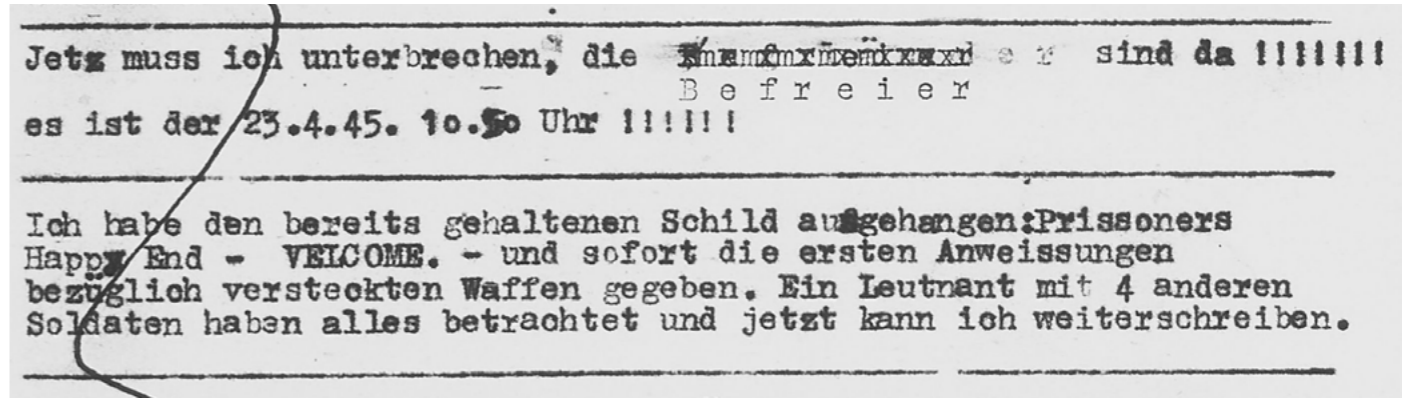
LIBERATION

AS A LIMINAL

STATE

Mid-April 1945: The SS had begun dismantling the Flossenbürg camp complex. Prisoners in the main camp and subcamps were being pushed towards the remaining camps in Dachau, Mauthausen and Leitmeritz. Many, however, never arrived there. They were murdered by the SS during the marches, collapsed from exhaustion or were liberated by Allied troops along the way. The main Flossenbürg camp was liberated on 23 April, but the Leitmeritz subcamp remained under SS-control until 8 May. Although the Allied troops were familiar with the brutality of war, they were not prepared for a humanitarian catastrophe of this magnitude. Despite the Allies' efforts to provide immediate medical care, many survivors died shortly after their liberation as a result of conditions caused by their imprisonment. Those who were still able to stand on their own two feet offered medical care to their comrades, organised the first memorial services, bore

witness, searched for relatives and friends and looked for ways to return home. The following examples illustrate how people experienced the liminal state of liberation and struggled to return to normality. It becomes clear that only a very few experienced the liberation as a joyful event. The shadows of camp imprisonment extended far beyond 1945.



THE FIRST REPORT

On the evening of 22 April 1945, Emil Lešák was sitting in front of a typewriter in the largely evacuated Flossenbürg concentration camp. With new certainty that the advancing US Army troops were about to reach the main camp, he began writing a report. In the previous days, the SS in the camp had begun a hectic retreat and forced thousands of exhausted prisoners onto death marches to the south without any food or provisions. Having worked as a journalist before his imprisonment, writing came easy to Emil Lešák. He organised his thoughts and memories and began writing at 9:15 in the evening.

He was very aware of his role as a chronicler. He wrote that he was bearing witness to all that had happened since his arrival in Flossenbürg on 17 August 1942. By the afternoon of 23 April 1945, he had completed a twenty-page report in German. Lešák deliberately wrote the report in the language of the perpetrators, knowing that a document in his native Czech would have been of little use to the Americans. Later, his notes were used in the investigations of the Nuremberg Trials and Flossenbürg Main Trial against 45 defendants in Dachau.

Lešák's report demonstrates his powers of observation as well as his knowledge of German, a skill that helped him to get a job doing light office work instead of hard physical labour during his imprisonment. It also allowed him to see into the workings of the concentration camp.

In the report, Lešák occasionally abandons the role of the observer and objective chronicler and becomes more of a witness; for example, when he describes individual SS men and prisoner functionaries (Kapos), their tasks and character traits. His unbridled joy at the moment of liberation is felt clearly and can be pinpointed precisely.

'I have to interrupt here, the liberators have arrived!!!!!! It is 23.4.45. 10.50 a.m. !!!!! I have hung up the sign already: Prisoners Happy End - WELCOME.'

After the interruption, which is visible in the text, Lešák pulled himself together and continued writing. His notes were part of the evidence used to convict and send most of the defendants to prison; some were even sentenced to death.

Timo Saalman

FROM THE LIBERATORS' PERSPECTIVE



Stills taken from film footage of the US Army Signal Corps, 30 April and 4 May 1945



Liberating the camps was not a declared war aim; Flossenbürg was discovered almost in passing. Thus, Goldstein and many of his comrades had little prior knowledge of the camp. At first they felt excited anticipation, but the reality of the camp, full of suffering and death, left them feeling nothing but emptiness, shock and bitterness. Goldstein described conversations with liberated prisoners who were more dead than alive and who felt guilty that they had survived when so many others had not. He mentioned the heaps of corpses and the machinery of death and that he will never be the same again. The young man seems driven by the desire to bear witness, although what he really wants is just to forget everything. Many liberators who had encountered widespread death during their wartime combat missions struggled for decades to record their memories of what they had experienced in the liberated camp. They were often helpless to do anything more than testify to what they had seen. This act of remembering is nevertheless important – it helped them process the experience, but it also helped us better understand that the act of liberation serves more as a liminal state.

Tamara Heger

'Have you seen the pits with human ashes?' Richard Goldstein asked his parents this question in a letter dated 30 April 1945. In it, he shared his impressions of the Flossenbürg concentration camp that had been discovered a few days earlier. What he saw was proof to him of the Germans' deep-seated aggression, and it left him unable to ever think of Germany again without feeling loathing and hatred. If you have not seen the camp personally, he wrote, it is impossible to imagine the level of contempt for humanity. From Goldstein's letter, it also becomes clear that everyone involved in freeing the camp, including the liberators, were overwhelmed by the situation. The mostly young soldiers quickly realised that the symbolic act of opening the gates was the beginning of a long, complex, chaotic, tragic and traumatic process.

VELEŠÍN

Velešín, South Bohemia, 8 May 1945: The war was over nearly everywhere in Europe except in Bohemia, which was still under German occupation. Velešín lay on the demarcation line where the US troops and the Red Army had agreed to meet. The only military in the area were the so-called Vlasov units – Russian soldiers who had fought alongside the Germans before switching sides and aiding the Czech insurgents.

The railway line to Linz in Austria ran right by Velešín. At that time, it was overloaded with military transports and refugee convoys of Germans heading west. The town's chronicler described the atmosphere in the last days of the war: 'Everyone was so on edge that we eagerly awaited liberation, not only from the physical but also from the emotional distress.'

While many were celebrating the end of the war throughout Europe, news arrived in Velešín that despite the unconditional surrender, the SS were planning to drive a train full of concentration camp prisoners through the town. Czech railway workers forced the train to stop near Velešín. Roughly 2,000 exhausted and sick prisoners were transported to the nearby football field, where the local medical service provided them with first aid. A humanitarian operation was launched, the likes of which the town had never seen before.

Růžena Růžičková, the widow of Josef Růžička, who had served as headmaster of the municipal school, was one of the helpers. Her husband,

a Czech patriot who had been imprisoned early in the war for his openly anti-Nazi views, died in the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1942. Růžičková devoted herself selflessly to treating the ill, but her direct contact with sick people had fatal consequences. She caught typhus and died. Today, the couple's names are included on a memorial dedicated to the victims of the war in Velešín.

Maurice Corbeau, a Frenchman and the father of three, was one of the liberated prisoners. Before his arrest, he had lived and worked as a farmer near the small village of Veilleins in central France. In 1943, Corbeau was

deported via the Buchenwald concentration camp to Hradischko, a subcamp of Flossenbürg in central Bohemia. The residents of Velešín were unable to help him. He died shortly after his liberation from the camp. His name can be found on the memorial dedicated to the fallen in the Veilleins cemetery.

Růžena Růžičková and Maurice Corbeau were far from the only people to die during this time. In Velešín alone, thirteen former concentration camp prisoners are buried in a common grave. Their fate is a reminder that liberation did not only bring joy and relief, and that the suffering caused by the war did not end on 8 May 1945.

Pavla Plachá

Růžena Růžičková (right) with other helpers from Velešín and former prisoners



LIBERATED BUT NEVER FREE



Two members of the US Army are standing in the foreground of the photograph taken of the prisoner camp entrance at the Flossenbürg concentration camp. Captain Moundy is seen on the left and Major Samuel S. Gray Jr. on the right. The young boy standing in front of the gate on the right side is easy to miss. This is Jakob Szabmacher from the small Polish town of Bełżyce near Lublin. Jakob endured the Nazi extermination program for more than five years. Only a few of the Jewish men, women and children from Bełżyce survived the massacres and selections to death camps. Jakob was nine years old when he was deported to Budzyń to work as a forced labourer for the Heinkel Factory. After toiling for months in the Wieliczka salt mine, he was sent to Flossenbürg concentration camp in August 1944. He was registered there with the prisoner number 14086.

For years, Jakob lived in a world dominated by tyranny, powerlessness and murder – and survived. The Flossenbürg camp gate marked a threshold, a transition between the world of terror and violence and an outside world that represented freedom as of 23 April 1945. With the arrival of the Allied troops, Jakob could finally cross this threshold. Major Gray placed the fifteen-year-old boy in charge of the gate. He was tasked with watching who came and went, which is how he became part of this historical photograph.

Jakub Szabmacher moved to the United States in March 1946. From then on, he called himself Jack Terry. Decades later he explained in an interview why the liberation was not a joyous day for him: 'The liberation was the saddest day of my life. Because then I realized that I was alone. I was 15 years old and now I realized my parents were dead, my siblings were dead. I was alone. So, my tendency is when people ask me, when was I liberated, I was never liberated. The camp was liberated, the human being going through an experience like this is never liberated.'

Christa Schikorra



THE CHILDREN FROM THE INDERSDORF CLOISTER

When Martin Hecht and Shmuel Reinstein visited Flossenbürg to attend memorial ceremonies, there was one special area they liked to go to: The prisoner register in the lower level of the museum. They wanted to show their relatives and friends that they had arrived in the Flossenbürg concentration camp in 1945, just shortly before liberation. Most of their family members were killed in the Holocaust, but these young boys, who were deemed 'fit to work' by the Nazis, survived not only Auschwitz and other camps, but also the brutal evacuation marches. They found this information recorded in the prisoner register: 14-year-old Shmuel Reinstein and his older brother Meir had been 'transferred' from Buchenwald to Flossenbürg; 13-year-old Martin Hecht and his brother Jakob had come from the Groß-Rosen concentration camp.

Martin and Jakob, Shmuel and Meir had to endure the Flossenbürg concentration camp until 16 April 1945, when they were put on a train to Dachau with other Jewish inmates. In Schwarzenfeld, the train mistakenly came under fire by the US Air Force. The prisoners, who were in a wretched state, were forced to continue their nightly marches until the American troops liberated them near Stamsried on 23 April.

Shmuel, Meir, Martin and Jakob regained their strength in the military hospital in Neunburg vorm Wald. While recovering,

they registered with the Jewish Committee. They stated that they were over 16 years old and wanted to emigrate to England. They were subsequently sent with other young survivors from Flossenbürg to the international DP camp, the Cloister Indersdorf Children's Centre.

When the first transport carrying around 50 children from Indersdorf was scheduled to leave for England in October 1945, the four boys were on the passenger list. On the day of their departure, each one was handed a sign with their name on it. This was the idea of the UNRRA director, Lillian D. Robbins. The sign served as a travel document, but more importantly, it was used to track down surviving family members. Shortly before departing for England, Shmuel and Meir Reinstein found two older sisters and decided to immigrate with them to Israel instead. Martin and Jakob Hecht travelled with the transport to England.

Thanks to the publication of the 'sign pictures', since 2010, several survivors in Israel, England, Canada, Belgium, the United States, Hungary and Brazil have been found and invited to the annual memorial ceremonies in Flossenbürg and Indersdorf. In recent years, these survivors have also enjoyed visiting the Flossenbürg exhibition 'what remains', where they find photos of themselves from 1945: They look young, but are they really?

Anna Andlauer

GENESIS



The Durnez siblings (from left to right): Gabriël, Michiel, Marcel, Daniël, Gilbert; 1938

searching for an unfulfilled expectation. “Marcel,” she asked, “where’s Daniël and Gilbert? Where are your suitcases and your beautiful clothes?” I had left the tram by then and said: “We don’t have any more nice clothes or suitcases.” I couldn’t summon up the courage to tell my mother the truth. She stood there staring at the open tram door where she had expected to find three sons. Her idea of a happy reunion was shattered and I could only stammer: “What, mother, are they not here yet?” I couldn’t tell her. I didn’t know how to tell her. I remained silent. After all, she knew nothing of the horror we had experienced. She wouldn’t understand it. She went back to the church square regularly for three or four days, hoping that Daniël and Gilbert would come home too.’

A few days after his return, my father finally confided in Martha, his godmother and mother’s sister: ‘I gathered all my courage. It was a great relief for me to be able to say it. A burden was lifted off me. “Yes, godmother,” I said, “Yes, they are dead” and I burst into tears. It was all I could do. My godmother urged me to tell her everything that had happened. Little by little it all came out.’

Yves Durnez

Between 1995 and 2008, my father, Marcel Durnez, told me a lot about his life. From 2007 to 2008, I had the good fortune to sit with him every Sunday. He would tell me his story, I would listen, ask questions, and occasionally take notes.

Marcel Durnez was imprisoned in the Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Flossenbürg concentration camps with his older brothers, Daniël and Gilbert. He survived, but my uncles died in Flossenbürg. Marcel was liberated on a death march to Dachau on 23 April 1945. He joined other Belgian survivors who were trying to return to Belgium. He told me the journey home was long and they had to change trains many times. Shortly before arriving in his hometown of Geluwe, my father began to wonder how his mother would react to the news that her other two sons had died. When he finally saw her standing in front of him, he felt paralysed: ‘It was 18 May 1945, the tram stopped in the church square, the door opened and I saw my mother coming towards me. She looked at me, then to my left and right and behind me, but she didn’t see anyone else she knew. She continued to look blankly into the tram carriage,

LIVING ON



When Ekaterina Filippovna Davidenkova returned home, the Soviet government accused her of having collaborated with the Germans because she had been imprisoned in a concentration camp. When her husband, an officer in the Red Army, was up for promotion, he was given the choice of leaving his wife or resigning from the army. Davidenkova was left alone with their son.

‘Then a new life started, but the new life, was no life. Every day was another day for me, but I was just moving, I didn’t know where I was, I didn’t know any purpose. And I would go on the road. I would go hitchhike. They asked me “Where do you want to go?“, I said anywhere.’

After his liberation, eighteen-year-old David Arben didn’t know where he wanted to go. Many people like Arben, who experienced the end of the war, had mixed feelings at the liberation. Some were happy to have survived; others were so weak that they barely realised they had been freed. Many were able to face the loss of loved ones for the first time in years. The hope that had sustained prisoners in the camps now seemed uncertain. Unlike in the camps, thinking about the future now meant more than just surviving each day.



David Arben immigrated to the United States and studied violin at the Philadelphia Conservatory. He played with several different orchestras and became assistant concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Starting over was not easy for any of the survivors. Persecution and imprisonment left them with physical and psychological wounds from which many never recovered. Quite a few were tormented by shame and asked themselves why they had survived when so many others had not. For Jews, and Sinti and Roma, whose entire families had been targeted by the Nazi extermination policies, there were often only a few surviving family members. Robbed by the Nazis of their economic basis, many survivors were destitute at the end of the war and dependent on support from welfare organisations, friends and relatives. Postwar societies did not make it easy for people who had been imprisoned to start over. Few were interested in hearing the stories of survivors; many survivors were denied recognition as victims for decades. They suffered persecution again after the war or were viewed with suspicion by the state when they returned to their home countries. Many found living among the former perpetrators impossible, while others were reluctant to return home because of the rise of communism in Eastern Europe. These people turned their backs on Europe once and for all and sought their fortunes in the United States, Australia or Israel.



The Sintiza Anna Mettbach struggled for years to obtain recognition as a victim from the German government, a status that she needed to receive compensation for the physical abuse and health damage she had suffered under the Nazis.

Julius Scharnetzky

HAVE WE FAILED?

In 2025, we are commemorating the 80th anniversary of the liberation from Nazi terror. We are commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe. We are commemorating the liberation of the concentration camps, which began on 27 January, when Red Army units reached the Auschwitz concentration camp, and ended on 8 May 1945, when Nazi Germany submitted to unconditional surrender.

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An abundance of commemorations and ceremonies will be held in the spring of 2025. And this raises the concern that the endless repetition of 'Never again!', a well-intentioned, but empty cliché used in a continuous loop in public statements, will be depleted of any meaning; despite all serious efforts to instil the phrase with significance and vigour, its overuse will simply wear it out. By May 2025 at the latest, questions will arise: How much remembrance and reminders does a society need? What is a reasonable amount of remembrance? When does remembrance become counterproductive? Is there such a thing as too much remembrance? And in view of the global political situation and the growing temporal distance to the Nazi era, the following questions become even more fundamental: Was Germany's culture of remembrance unsuccessful? Has all our work and dedication been futile? Have we failed?



These are not new considerations: In the 1980s, critical intellectuals and academics had already begun to question the value of memorial days and their contemporary political content. The famous Tübingen philosopher Ernst Bloch remarked in 1985 that memorial days rarely hit their mark. Around the same time, historian Lutz Niethammer stated that political public holidays in the Federal Republic of Germany had been a complete 'failure'. In the forty years since these criticisms were expressed, the national political coordinates have fundamentally changed. Political blocs and systems have collapsed; countries have united or fought for their independence. Global crises have become more dynamic.

A look back to the 1980s can help sharpen our view of the commemorative year 2025 and allow us to place it in a milder and more hopeful context. On the eve of 1985, the political institutions of the German capital in Bonn were still not sure whether commemorating the end of the war on 8 May 1945 was even possible. And if it was, how should it be done? There were fundamental debates over

On the initiative of the Flossenbürg local government, in 1995 Flossenbürg was added to the memorial plaque erected in 1967 on Wittenbergplatz in Berlin, 2000s

whether this day was even worthy of commemorating or 'celebrating'. It was recommended that the event be commemorated quietly, especially given the new escalation in the East-West confrontation, which had triggered an 'arms race' between the socialist Warsaw Pact states and the NATO allies. In the end, German President Richard von Weizsäcker held a speech on 8 May 1985 that surpassed both in clarity and in power anything that had ever been expressed by a high-level representative of the Federal Republic of Germany in the previous four decades. Today, von Weizsäcker's speech is still considered epochal and a turning point because it clearly acknowledged Germany's guilt and identified the 8th of May not as a 'defeat', 'unconditional surrender'

CONCENTRATION CAMP MEMORIALS ARE SEISMOGRAPHS OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS.



or 'collapse', but unequivocally as a 'day of liberation'. In Weizsäcker's words: 'The 8th of May was a day of liberation. It liberated us from the inhumanity and tyranny of the National Socialist regime.'

From today's perspective, this sentence seems so self-evident, almost banal, that it is easy to overlook the caesura it signalled. But to assess where we stand today, we must make the effort to visualise the last 40 years. A look at Flossenbürg is extremely illuminating in this respect. In April 1985, only a small section of the former concentration camp grounds was designated a memorial. In the mid-1950s, a housing estate was built on the foundations of the prisoner camp and SS barracks; the roll call square with the former laundry building and prisoner kitchen were being used as an industrial site; the former concentration camp quarry, along with the factory halls and administrative buildings there, were operating under civilian management. Commemoration, if it took place at all, was limited to honouring the dead in a memorial landscape designed like a crossroads: an overgrown cemetery and an execution yard hidden by trees amidst the ruins of the former detention building. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Wilhelm Canaris, Hans Oster and other members of the 20th of July 1944 resistance movement were

commemorated in ceremonies held in early April 1985. A few weeks later a small memorial service, attended only by prominent local politicians, marked the anniversary of the camp's liberation. Former prisoners were not present at either event.

The 1980s marked the peak of forgetting and at the same time the beginning of society's critical and lasting reappraisal of the mass crimes committed by the Nazis. History workshops popped up everywhere, a new generation of teachers changed everyday school life, forgotten places and forgotten victims were rediscovered and contemporary witnesses were actively sought out. In the 1990s, this social awakening acquired a completely new framework as a result of the peaceful revolutions in the socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe. Hermetic state-dictated historical images and narratives began to falter and a democratic and democratising culture of history emerged as one of the central tasks of politics and society. Naturally, this democratic culture of history included battles over interpretation and manifest conflicts of interest. The struggle over the historical and political reassessment of the history of state crimes before and after 1945 became one of the central debates of the 1990s. These discussions made it abundantly clear that the commemoration of Nazi atrocities until then had been utterly inadequate – both in the old Federal Republic and in the former GDR. Further social, academic and institutional upheavals followed, which led to the introduction or readjustment of state-funding for programs aimed at developing the crime sites into democratic sites of research, knowledge and learning while maintaining their previous commemorative function.

Flossenbürg is a good example of this development. In the mid-1990s, a critical report on the state of the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial

was published under the title, 'From Concentration Camp to Park: From a forgotten concentration camp to the re-discovery of a European remembrance site'. This is a good description of the typical stages that followed, stages that are documented in this magazine: the attendance of former prisoners and their relatives at ceremonies since the 50th anniversary in 1995; the establishment of the first academic research position in 1996; the retrocession of the former roll call square in 1998; the establishment of a permanent research and administrative centre in 1999; the opening of the new permanent exhibition on the history of the camp in the former laundry building in 2007; the opening of the second permanent exhibition on the postwar history of the Flossenbürg concentration camp in 2010; the establishment of an education centre in the former SS casino in 2015; the opening of an inclusive café, the expansion of the concentration camp memorial as a scientific research facility and the establishment of the Center for Commemorative Culture with the University of Regensburg in 2021; and finally, the gradual integration of the former concentration camp quarry into the concentration camp memorial complex, which began in 2023 and is still underway.

But these represent just the basic facts. That they read like a success story is not only cause for celebration – it is also a truncated and sometimes problematic view of events. Commemorating the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazis was achieved despite strong resistance. It is less a story of success than one of realisation – not only on a scientific and political level, but also on a general human level. Dealing with these crimes can be just as challenging as working with the people who visit this crime site – the relatives, visitors, neighbours – can be rewarding. Concentration camp memorials are seismographs of social conditions. The mood and emotional state of society is perceptible here. It seems like a paradox that people are motivated to



↑
German President Richard von Weizsäcker during his groundbreaking speech before the German Bundestag on the 40th anniversary of the end of the war and the liberation of Germany by the Allies, 1985

↓
View of the memorial site with the former camp quarry in the background, 2019

visit these historical crime sites out of a need to reassure themselves of the value of our democracy, indeed of our own intrinsic humanity. Looking into the depths of hell can help sharpen our awareness of what is essential and help us recognise its fragility. Concentration camp memorials, as one of the central components of Germany's culture of remembrance, are democratic and democratising places. These are the everyday practical findings from the perspective of a concentration camp memorial. The fact that we can summarily list off this progress today is the achievement of a decades-long struggle. However, this is not a reason to relax – in fact, it is quite the opposite. Our culture of remembrance follows neither a master plan nor any DIN standards, as the historian Timothy Garton Ash once put it with British irony. Remembrance culture is fragile, and it is precisely this seemingly established nature that makes it vulnerable.

In this context, our current culture of remembrance has not failed, but it is under threat. It needs many supporters, fellow campaigners and, importantly, critical observers and innovative minds. If we did not have them as well as the many people who are committed to working in and with concentration camp memorials, our society would be much more fragile today.

Jörg Skriebeleit

FLOSSENBÜRG REMEMBRANCE SITE

Caroline Emig und Julius Scharnetzky

SITE



Entrance to the Polish DP-Camp in Flossenbürg, 1946

As of summer of 1946, the site is used for nearly a year to house displaced persons (DPs).



Construction of the memorial complex 'Valley of Death', 1947



Refugee housing and commercial businesses on the grounds of the former concentration camp, 1956



Memorial complex 'Valley of Death', 1950s

The recent past is also repressed in Flossenbürg in the decade after the war. The former camp grounds are reutilised pragmatically and many traces of the camp's history are altered or eradicated. The memory of former prisoners is limited to dignified burial grounds. In 1956, a memorial cemetery is added to the 'Valley of Death' memorial complex. Under the assumption that remembrance needs had been sufficiently met, a housing estate is built on a section of the former camp grounds.



Residential estate erected at Am Vogelherd, late 1950s



1950-1960

1945 • 1950 • 1955 • 1960

REMEMBRANCE



Commemoration and liberation ceremony on the roll call square, 1 May 1945



Dedication of the memorial cemetery in the centre of the camp grounds, 27 September 1946

Polish residents of the DP camp establish a concentration camp memorial incorporating relics of the camp. It is one of the first memorials of this kind in Europe. The 'Jesus in the Dungeon' chapel and the 'Valley of Death' form the centrepiece of this heavily Christian monument.

1946



Cornerstone laying of the chapel, 1 September 1946

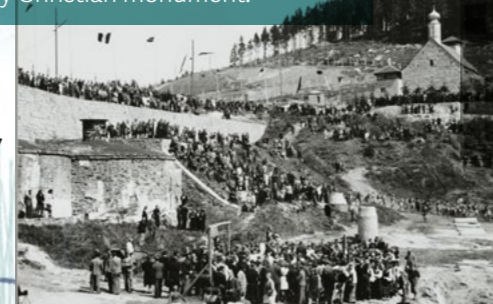


Memorial objects in the former crematorium provided by relatives of prisoners in the French association Association des Déportés de Flossenbürg et Kommandos, 1950s



Creation of the memorial cemetery on the former camp grounds in 1956, 1960

Dedication of the chapel and memorial complex 'Valley of Death', 25 May 1947



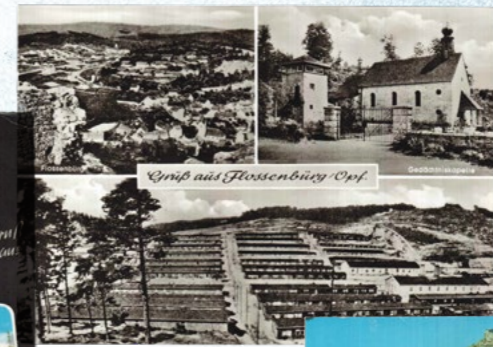
1974-1984



The former roll call square and its surrounding structures are used for industrial purposes beginning in the late 1940s. The remaining buildings serve as housing for mostly German displaced persons. After these people move into houses in the new estate, most of the now empty buildings are demolished. The former detention centre is also torn down in 1964. The execution wall and building remains are preserved, but only after Protestant groups protest the demolition.



Demolition of the former detention building, 1964



Postcards from Flossenbürg, 1960s and 1970s



Production plant on the former roll call square, 1970s



• 1965 • 1970 • 1975 • 1980 •



Commemoration honouring Wilhelm Canaris, 1965



Commemoration ceremony by the German association of young trade unionists, 1970s

Active commemoration of the Flossenbürg concentration camp is limited to honouring the 20th of July resistance fighters, some of whom were murdered in Flossenbürg. In the 1970s, other groups, such as the French Association de Flossenbürg, the Belgian Amicale Flossenbürg and the Gewerkschaftsjugend, an association of young trade unionists, begin organising commemoration ceremonies and political rallies in Flossenbürg.



Commemoration by the French Association de Flossenbürg, 1976



Newspaper article about Italian president Sandro Pertini's visit to the memorial on 22 September 1979, 24 September 1979

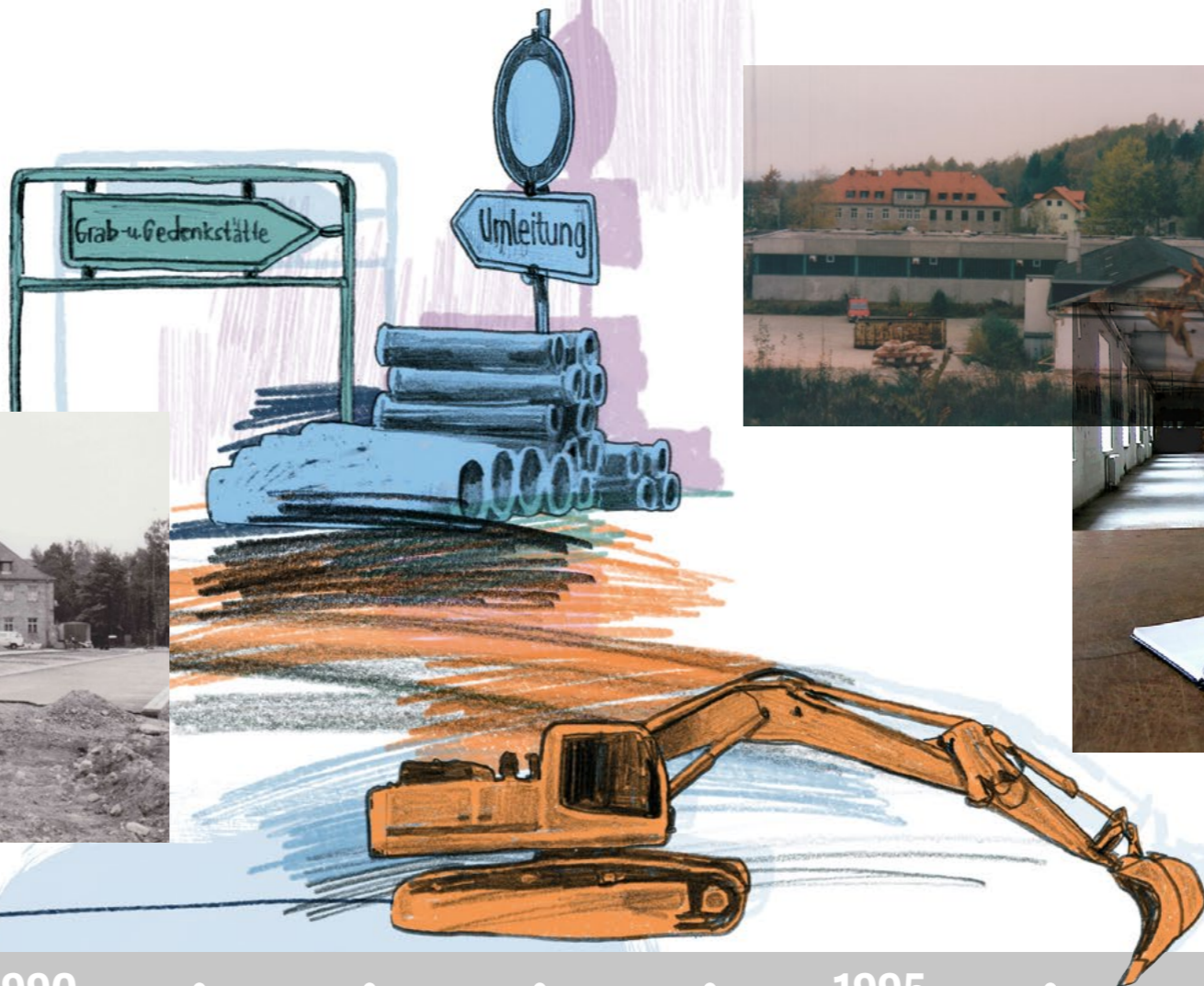
Flier on the first exhibition in the former detention building, 1979/80



In the 1980s, interest in the Nazi past grows nationwide. There is little evidence of this in Flossenbürg, however. Traces of the camp are hardly visible. In response to public pressure, the Bavarian Palace Administration in charge of the grounds sets up a small documentary exhibition in the former detention centre.



Plaza in front of the former commandant's office after completion of building measures for the town's remodelling, 1980s



Factory hall on the former roll call square, 1990s



First exhibition in the former camp laundry building in 2002

1980-1990

1985

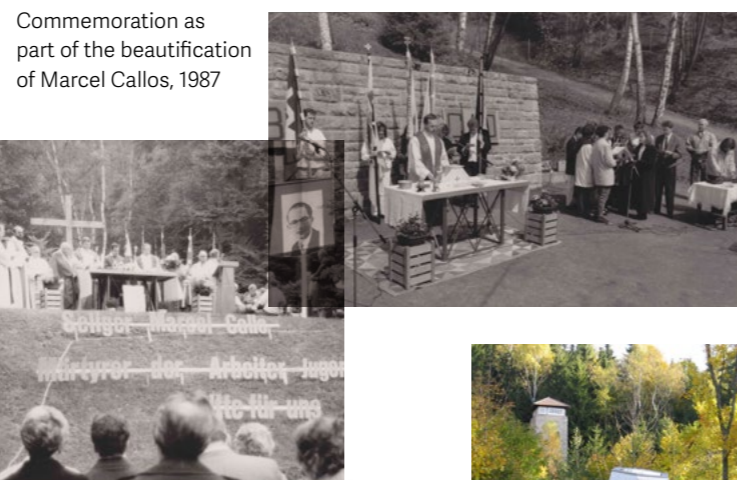
1990

1995

2000



Dedication of the Jewish memorial stone, 1984



Commemoration as part of the beautification of Marcel Callos, 1987



Commemoration by the Free State of Bavaria on the 50th anniversary of the liberation



Erecting the SPD memorial stone

The 50th anniversary of the liberation marks a turning point for remembrance. In the days around 23 April 1995, a variety of commemorative events, organised by various groups, are held in Flossenbürg for the first time. One year later, the first scholarly documentation centre is established in the town of Flossenbürg. This marks the beginning of a fundamental conceptual shift.



Commemoration on the anniversary of the camp's liberation, 1999



Cover of the book, '30 000 dead admonish!', first publication about the Flossenbürg concentration camp, 1984

Dedication of a memorial plaque in honour of the 90th US Infantry Division



Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer's death



Establishment of the Jewish prayer house and memorial



1995

Youth Exchange Program of the Protestant Youth of Upper Franconia



Ideas workshop with camp survivors on the future of the Flossenbürg Memorial, 1998



2005



Renovation work on the former camp laundry building, 2005



Renovation work on the grounds of the former roll call square, 2003



In the first decade of the new millennium, Flossenbürg is rediscovered as a European site of remembrance. Within a short span of time, a cemetery complex is redesigned into a contemporary history museum offering a wide range of educational programs and engaging in scientific research funded by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Free State of Bavaria.



2010



Renovating the former prisoner kitchen and mounting the exhibition 'What Remains. The Aftermath of the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp', 2010



Converting the former SS mess hall into an education centre, 2012

2012



2005



Commemorative event on Memorial Day, 2003



2007



Opening of the permanent exhibition, 'Flossenbürg Concentration Camp, 1938 – 1945' in the presence of then-Ukrainian president Victor Yushchenko with his family, 2007

The concentration camp memorial is committed to preserving the dignity of victims and survivors. To this end, it secures traces of the camp and documents the number of victims. The first comprehensive permanent exhibition opens in the former camp laundry building in 2007.

2010

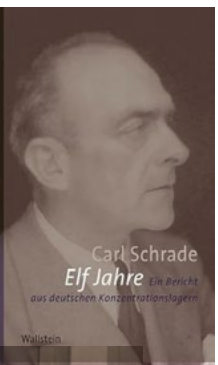


Opening of the permanent exhibition, 'What Remains. The Aftermath of the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp', 2010



Group from the Association des Déportés de Flossenbürg et Kommandos, 2012

German publication of Carl Schrade' memoirs, 'Eleven Years. A Report from German Concentration Camps', 2014



Carl Schrade
Elf Jahre
Ein Bericht aus deutschen Konzentrationslagern
Wolsten



Presenting the book with the names of all the prisoners of the Flossenbürg concentration camp, 2005



Survivors meeting, 2005



Dedication of the memorial plaque for the French resistance fighters Hélène Lignier, Simone Michel-Lévy and Noémie Suchet, 2008



Awarding the Bavarian Museum Prize, 2011

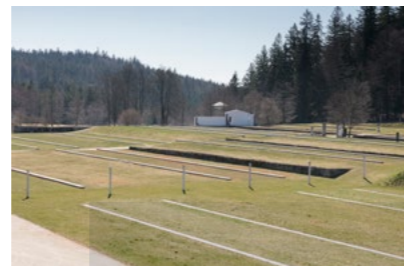
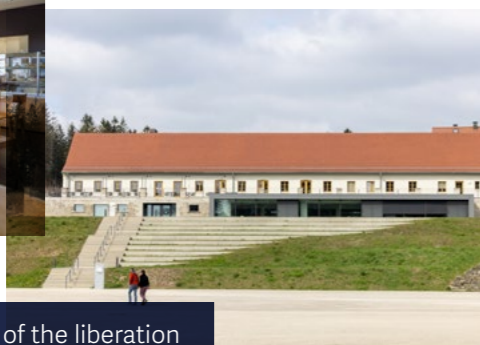


Awarding the Special Commendation European Museum of the Year Award, 2014

2015



Opening of the education centre and museum café, 2015



Completion of the remodelling of the grounds, 2015



The 70th anniversary of the liberation marks the completion of the remodelled outdoor facilities in the former SS and prisoner area. The education centre and museum café open in the former SS mess hall.

Granite mining in the former concentration camp quarry ends and the area is integrated into the work of the concentration camp memorial. This serves as a catalyst for reflections on how to shape remembrance culture in the future.



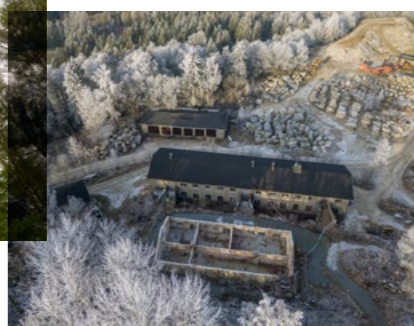
Transfer of the former quarry administration building to the Bavarian Memorials Foundation in 2023 (photo from 2019)



Granite mining in the former concentration camp quarry ends in April 2024 (photo from 2019)



Art installation 'Sichtung IV', 2021



2015

2020

2025



Dedication of the memorial stone in memory of the Sinti and Roma imprisoned in the Flossenbürg camp complex, 2016



Dedication of the Hersbruck subcamp memorial, 2016

First International MemArch Tutorial, 2018



Exhibition, 'End of Testimony?', 2020

Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial plays an active role in supporting a diverse and lively remembrance culture through exhibitions and art installations, educational programs, research projects and collaborations with partners from Germany and abroad.



Dedication of the memorial stone in memory of prisoners persecuted on the basis of Paragraph 175, 2022



Israeli-German professionals program 'Shared History: Different Approaches', 2016



Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Regensburg and the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial, 2018

2021-2023



German-Czech Meeting 'Memory Moves' with Alan Brooks, 2021





PLAYING LIVE-KICKER AND TALKING WITH SURVIVORS

25 YEARS OF YOUTH EXCHANGE MEETINGS IN FLOSSENBÜRG



The international youth exchange meeting in Flossenbürg has been taking place annually since 1999. Young people from all over Europe and Israel come together to learn about the history of the concentration camp and how it is remembered.

In 2014, the Protestant Youth of Upper Franconia handed over responsibility for organising the youth exchange meeting to the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial. How do former participants and organisers look back on these meetings of the last 25 years?

Christa offered to take over the planning and implementation side of things and asked: 'Could you also imagine putting your own stamp on the program?' 'A reboot and not a remake,' I replied with a laugh. I was involved! But what were the Protestant Youth Exchange Meetings actually? I knew nothing about them in 2014. Nor how they had come about. So I had to do a little research.



Joint evening with the Protestant Youth Exchange Meeting of Upper Franconia, 2001



On the anniversary of the liberation in 1994, 'Flossenbürg Subcamp', a working group of the Protestant Youth of Upper Franconia, invited representatives from associations and memorial initiatives to attend a seminar at the nearby Altglashütte. The idea was to bring

In 2014, I, Matthias Rittner, was part of the project staff of the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial. I had organised numerous tours and seminars and really enjoyed the work. It must have been in February of that year when Christa Schikorra, head of the education department, asked me: 'Could you imagine organising the International Youth Exchange Meeting in July? The two main organisers from the Protestant Youth of Upper Franconia, who have been doing this for years, are unable to do it for personal reasons. But we would like to keep this program running.' I had seen some of the youth exchange program the previous summer, in 2013, and noticed that the participants were highly motivated. 'I'd really like to do it,' I said, without giving it much thought.



interested people together to plan the upcoming 50th anniversary of the liberation. The participants also discussed organising a youth exchange meeting and the first one finally took place in 1999. Jörg Schröder and Kerstin Wolf from the Protestant Youth of Upper Franconia were in charge of it, and in the following years they were also responsible for organising the event and planning the content. Some 130 young people from Europe and Israel took part each year.

Elke Durnez from Belgium, granddaughter of Flossenbürg survivor Marcel Durnez, participated in the Protestant Youth of Upper Franconia meeting several times. She remembers the large green army tents erected next to the former SS casino (now the education centre) and how they were filled with cots where the young people slept. She also emembers the long evenings around the campfire. There was a lot of singing and laughter. 'In one of the last years I was there, there was a live football match. We were the cheerleaders back then; we dressed up in decorated trash bags and danced a whole choreography while the memorial staff competed against the youth meeting counsellors.' There were a lot of activities that promoted a sense of community. The program included workshops on the site's history. The participants carried out very practical tasks as well, such as weeding. Talks with survivors of the concentration camp were a recurring part of the meetings. Elke is certain that speaking with other survivors helped her better communicate and understand her grandfather's story. The youth exchange meetings made this possible.

Between 1999 and 2013, the Protestant Youth organised fifteen youth exchange meetings with a great deal of zeal and dedication. They were held every year in July at the same time as the 'survivors meeting' at the concentration camp memorial. These important days of remembrance



Tent housing during the youth meeting provided by the Protestant Youth of Upper Franconia, 2008

were primarily dedicated to international understanding, reconciliation and intercultural learning. When the Protestant Youth were unable to continue organising the youth meetings, the concentration camp memorial stepped in and kept the program running. The youth exchange meetings are based on two central pillars: the international aspect of the exchange and historical and political education. Henceforth fewer participants were invited, but more countries were involved. Since 2014, around 50 young people from roughly eleven different countries have taken part each year. Another 'innovation' was added in 2015: since the 70th anniversary of the liberation, the commemoration ceremony and youth meeting have taken place in April, not July. The education centre that opened in 2015 also provides several well-equipped seminar rooms. The international youth meeting was paused in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid pandemic and didn't take place again until 2022. Unfortunately, because of the war in Ukraine, no one from Ukraine or Belarus has been able to attend since then.

It is only while writing this text in the summer of 2024, that I realised that I have been organising the youth exchange meetings in Flossenbürg for ten years. And since 2023, we have been organising at least two youth meetings each year. For me personally, the meetings are an absolute highlight. I am fascinated by the different perspectives that



Impressions of the youth exchange meetings (from top to bottom): Warm-up games, 2016; young people speaking with survivor Martin Hecht, 2023; meeting participants at the commemoration ceremony, 2014

the participants bring to the meetings, their thoughts and, above all, their energy and interest. Of course, conflicts occasionally arise between the young people and there are heated discussions, but the great thing is that the participants are open to other people's opinions and interested in different views of history. Every year I am amazed by how, despite the strong differences, a temporary community is formed within a few days that is marked by openness, mutual understanding and a deep sense of appreciation. During the event, I don't see my role as someone teaching anything to these young people; I'm not a 'teacher'. I am experiencing the meeting with them.

I contacted a few former participants and asked them what they remember, what they 'had taken away' for themselves. Marta Rosavytska from Ukraine, who attended her first meeting in 2015 and returned as a chaperone in subsequent years, remembers the friendly atmosphere. She says it was invaluable 'to be able to speak to survivors and ask them questions directly'. Laura Dütsch, a participant from Germany in 2023, also vividly remembers the conversations with survivors, as well as 'the many talks with other participants who often had very different opinions, but we

always treated each other with respect. In general, we were a great community.' Anna Ritter, a participant from Hungary in 2016, has a similar view: 'During the days we spent together, we gradually became friends, and the ice was finally broken on the last evening when the whole group gathered in the Polish room, talked about the previous days and experiences until dawn, laughing, exchanging phone numbers and promising to stay in touch.' Such resolutions are often made in this kind of enthusiastic atmosphere, but what actually remains from the meetings? Anna from Hungary says that she 'mostly succeeded' in staying in touch. Over the years, she has exchanged words with several of the other participants and they still follow each other on social media. Johanna Vojcsik, also from Hungary, said her participation in the 2016 youth meeting was a reason why she studies history: 'At the time, I already knew I wanted to study history. But I was wavering between Roman antiquity and the Holocaust. After that week in Flossenbürg, I was more certain that I wanted to study the Holocaust.'

I, personally, am grateful for every single international exchange and the meetings with so many people. I'm glad I said 'Let's do it!' back in 2014 in Christa's office. I'm looking forward to future meetings!

Matthias Rittner

Group photo at the 2023 youth exchange meeting



'DURING THE DAYS WE SPENT TOGETHER, WE GRADUALLY BECAME FRIENDS'

CONVERSATIONS, CITRUS FRUIT AND SLIVOVITZ

REFLECTIONS ON MY ENCOUNTERS WITH CONCENTRATION CAMP SURVIVORS

In January 2009, when I was 23 years old, I took part in the German Bundestag's youth exchange program to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day. During the event, someone reminded us that we, as participants in the exchange program, were among the last 'witnesses of the witnesses.'

I didn't think much about this comment afterwards; I didn't really know who or what I was supposed to be a witness of. At the time, my encounters with survivors were limited to a lecture that Thomas Blatt had given at my school in 2002. I don't remember much about that today. Just that he spoke in a mix of Yiddish and English. I only realised much later that sitting before me was one of only 50 or so survivors of the Sobibor extermination camp.

Two and a half years later, as a recent university graduate, I began a job at the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial in July 2011. Back then, the liberation of the camp was commemorated with survivors in July. To this day, the entire staff is involved in organising this major event. And so, in 2011, I was given the keys to the company car and asked to accompany Leon Weintraub on his speaking tour to different schools. Was I nervous about being responsible for someone who had survived the Holocaust? I remember a lot about my first 'survivor meeting', but I don't remember that exactly. What I do remember is that Leon and his wife, Evamaria, were really wonderful. I remember the conversations with Hana Hnatová, who sat next to me at the first dinner. I can still see Jack Garfein in front of me, entertaining everyone around him with his jokes. Sergio Peletta, tanned by the Italian sun, stood somewhere off to the side and watching

the activity on the site. In another corner, survivors from Belarus and Ukraine were sitting together, chatting. At the time, it seemed almost absurd to me that I might be one of the last 'witnesses of the witnesses.' It was all so lively and it felt like it could go on like this forever. And from my point of view, it kind of did. Although we mourned the death of survivors from time to time, the number of those returning to Flossenbürg for the first time was still growing. And since I was still new to the team, the loss was less significant to me than to some of my veteran colleagues. That's different today.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, IT WAS ALWAYS ABOUT HUMANITY



Now it is mainly the relatives of former prisoners who come to Flossenbürg to mark the anniversary of the liberation. We have known some of them for many years. One person who couldn't attend in 2024 is Phil Glauben, the son of Max Glauben, who died in 2022. When I wrote him to say that we were thinking of him, he replied that he felt almost homesick. Homesick for a place where his father suffered? Phil's message underscores the essence of what has always characterised the relationship between the survivors, their families and the memorial staff and which still exists today: a friendly, almost familial bond. Although the past is an important part of our relationship – it is, after all, the reason why we know each other in the first place – we were never limited to our respective roles as survivors, relatives or employees of the memorial. First and foremost, it was always about humanity: I'm thinking of balmy summer evenings on the market square in Weiden, all kinds of conversations, the citrus fruit that Shlomo Lavi from Israel sent us at Christmas, the homemade slivovitz that Ljubisa Letic from Serbia brought as a gift and our ongoing effort to make the survivors' visit as pleasant as possible. Our meetings also took place far away from Flossenbürg in places like Vienna, Haifa and New York. For all of us, Flossenbürg was always more than just a small village in the northern Upper Palatinate.

Today, there are hardly any people left who can talk about the camps from personal experience. This caesura has increased the concern that the voices of the survivors will turn silent forever. Personally, I am not very worried about this because their memories have been preserved in countless videotaped interviews and written memoirs. The question that matters to me is how to make the testimonies come alive. How can we do justice to the people who have left us their stories? How can we ensure that the survivors, who in the future will only speak to us from various projection surfaces, are not reduced to the role of contemporary witnesses? In short, how do we preserve the humanity that has always characterised our relationship with each other?

With the distance of 16 years, I can now answer the question of what it means to be one of the last 'witnesses of the witnesses.' I would say to my 23-year-old self: It means having the privilege of meeting people who left us more than their memories, and it means accepting the responsibility that comes with this: the mandate to be human.

Julius Scharnetzky

THE SUPPORTING ASSOCIATION: YESTERDAY, TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE



Isabel
Traenckner-Probst



The supporting association of the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2024. We had some questions: Why was the association founded in the first place? Why is it still needed today? What activities has the association been involved in since its founding and why do so many see being a part of it as a labour of love?

The association was founded in 1999. What did you need funding for?

Schötz: The state funding for the concentration camp memorial was very low in the beginning. That's why Johann Werner, the mayor of Flossenbürg at the time, and Jörg Skriebeleit, came up with the idea of creating a supporting association to finance additional staff projects and to supplement the single staff position set up by the town of Flossenbürg that was held by Jörg Skriebeleit. We saw it as an opportunity.

What is your personal connection with the memorial? Why are you a member of the association?

Deyerling: My mother was a displaced person from Sudeten Germany. Her first home after she fled was in the barracks of the former concentration camp. My father came from a farming family in nearby St. Ötzen. That's how the two

of them met and fell in love. We moved to Neustadt, but my father remained very attached to his home. We came here every Sunday to visit my grandparents and frequently stopped by the former concentration camp. As a child, I thought it was a peaceful place, a park with lots of flowers, trees and chirping birds, but there was one small creepy factor: the crematorium. There was a certain unease, but I couldn't put my finger on it. When I asked questions at the time, I got evasive answers and it was not until I went to school and university that I learned what had happened there. Then I started learning about it in detail. When the supporting association was founded, I knew that I would join.

Neumann: You might say the founding year, 1999, was a time of upheaval. Jörg Skriebeleit's had been working from an office in the town hall and now his office was on the site of the current concentration camp memorial. I had worked for the local government for 17 years and you could tell that there was interest in doing more with the site. The idea of establishing a supporting association was met with great interest. And what the association has achieved since then is amazing. Hiring the scholar Johannes Ibel was particularly important. He created the basis for the register of names, which serves as a model for databases worldwide. As someone who has lived in Flossenbürg for so long, I am pleased with what has been done here. It has been a positive development. The concentration camp memorial is an urgently needed institution. Just look around Germany or the world. The daily news shows how urgently such institutions are needed.

Schroeter: My wife and I were politically active and we knew Jörg Skriebeleit from the protests against the Wackersdorf reprocessing plant. We used to live very near Dachau.



Heinrich Schroeter
and Brigitte Hese



IT HAPPENED ONE STEP AT A TIME.

Naturally our expectations were influenced by the presentation of the concentration camp memorial there. When we moved to Neustadt in the northern Upper Palatinate in the 1980s, one of our first trips led us to Flossenbürg. We were simply stunned because we hadn't expected the site, this park, to be like this. We thought long and hard about whether it was an appropriate place and resolved our inner conflict by recognising that it was also possible to commemorate the dead here, since there were graves, the chapel and other evidence, such as the watchtower and the so-called ash pyramid in the Valley of Death. We were supportive of all the changes initiated by Jörg Skriebeleit and then joined the supporting association in 2005. You can't run a site like this without a supporting association.

What was it like for you, Ms. Hese? As a child, you and your parents visited the burial grounds and memorial site several times. What impression did it make on you, coming here not as an adult but as a child?

Hese: I was maybe eight years old during those visits. Of course I had questions about the crematorium and what happened there. While we were on the grounds, we didn't talk much. But at home we were told what had happened. As a child, it baffled me and I wanted to get to the bottom of this place. The subject never let me go. I have visited many concentration camp memorials over the years and when I heard about the supporting association, I joined a few years after it was founded.

Back then there was a park, only one employee in the town hall, no archive and no databases. It required grass-roots work to turn the concentration camp memorial into what it is today: a place for learning and research. How did you approach this task? Did you want to create professional structures like at other memorials? What were your expectations?

Schötz: It happened one step at a time. The decisive factor in its establishment was that – although the people involved at the time had different political views – when it came to the concentration camp memorial, they were all on the same page. This was decisive for the development of both the supporting association and the concentration camp memorial. At the time, nobody envisaged what we have here today. It was a gradual process.

In the 25 years since the association was founded, were there projects or goals that hit a dead end or failed?

Neumann: Not at all. Everything ran its course. We were lucky that the mayor at the time, Johann Werner, was very

committed. In previous years, he had helped ensure that visitors were looked after and enquiries answered. In 1999, together with Jörg Skriebeleit, he gave the impetus for the supporting association. This was a stroke of luck for the town, for the concentration camp memorial and actually for the whole region and beyond. Johann Werner took over the chairmanship of the association.

We are going to make a big temporal leap now from the early years of the association to looking to the future. A big topic within remembrance work is the imminent end of witness testimony. What happens when the contemporary witnesses are gone? How does this change the work of the association?

Schötz: Well, we will no longer be providing individual support to former prisoners, as we had in the past. But of course we will continue supporting the projects at the concentration camp memorial that we have always supported. For example, we co-financed the 'International Stone Meeting' in 2023. Travelling journeymen from all over the world came to Flossenbürg for two weeks to help maintain the historical buildings. We support publications of the Flossenbürg Memorial, as well as the celebrations around the liberation anniversaries. There will always be work for the association to do.

In the coming years, the site of the former quarry will be incorporated into the concentration camp memorial. How will the association support this new concept?

Hese: That was a big topic at the last annual general meeting. The local population will be involved in the new concept for the site and the surrounding buildings.

The former administration building is already being used by the concentration camp memorial for exhibitions and film screenings, for example.

Schroeter: The main idea is to connect with the local population, with civil society, which can already be seen in the concept for the museum café. As a supporting association, we can be involved here.

The basic idea of the supporting association was to raise additional funds. The concentration camp memorial is now part of the Bavarian Memorials Foundation and is funded by the federal and state governments. To ask a heretical question: Why do we still need a supporting association?

Schötz: When my predecessor Johann Werner asked me if I would consider running for the chairmanship, he said that the association was not really needed anymore because the concentration camp memorial was flourishing and financially secure. I have always taken a different view. Not only financial but also moral support of this work is important. When government agencies are not able or willing to provide funding, they can turn to the supporting association. The association is an essential lobbyist.

Traenckner-Probst: In the survey on ideas for the quarry area that took place during the liberation celebrations in 2024, I suggested that these places, where craftsmanship used to take place, be made available to the public in the future as places for craftsmanship. We could set up open workshops or something like that here, with spaces for creative work, with discussion evenings and film screenings. This raises the question of funding, which immediately made me think of the supporting association. Of course that was just an idea, but at the time I had the feeling that there was still

THE ASSOCIATION IS AN ESSENTIAL LOBBYIST.



Marie Luise
Deyerling

a need for the association. It could be the way it was in the past with the association. Back when everything developed from a dynamic brainstorming process. That's exactly how I imagine it in the future.

Deyerling: I think the association will continue to exist because it is the link between the political organisations and the population. I come from Weiden and I've always felt it was very important that we not act like the work of the concentration camp memorial ends at the borders of Flossenbürg. It should have an impact beyond that, too. And I think that the association is and will remain an extremely important disseminator.

Schroeter: There has always been a certain distance between Floß and Flossenbürg, the way there is between many towns in the Upper Palatinate – the neighbour is not always that popular. That's where I see the association anchoring the concentration camp memorial in the region, beyond Flossenbürg. That is a very important function.

Do people approach you directly and make suggestions on what you could support?

Schötz: The association is not the generator of ideas; it is a supporter. The concentration camp memorial has a team that has grown and developed ideas in recent years. As the supporting association, we sometimes function as midwives or companions.

As with any organisation, recruiting new members is clearly an issue for the association. How do you appeal to young people? Is there interest there or is it difficult?

Schötz: We are like any other association in this respect. I would say that the average age of association members is not that young. But we have younger people too. We are currently working on a new brochure and a new website to attract more young members. Those of us on the executive board tend to be older. But I am confident that there will always be people who join because the issue is important to so many people. We currently have nearly 200 members in the association, which I am very pleased about.

There is a strong emotional component to being involved in the supporting association of a concentration camp memorial, when you think of the commemorative days for the liberation, for example, or visits from relatives. As a member, you are very close to the concentration camp memorial, its work and the people. What has been the most moving experience for each of you in the last 25 years?

Deyerling: I haven't lived in the region for a while now. But when I was still active on the Weiden town council, I organised a trip to the concentration camp memorial for council members. We invited members of the Jewish community to join us. Jörg Skriebeleit gave us a guided tour of the site. There was a tremendous interest in what had

I SEE THE ASSOCIATION ANCHORING THE CONCENTRATION CAMP MEMORIAL IN THE REGION, BEYOND FLOSSENBÜRG.



Karlhermann Schötz,
Chairman of the supporting association



Bernhard Neumann and
Friedrich Peterhans



been developed here. The group didn't just wallow in its pain. It gathered information and passed it on. That was a moving moment for me as a member of the association.

Neumann: An incredible number of people from all over the world attend the annual commemorations: survivors, friends, acquaintances, anyone with any connection to the site. From the very beginning, since I have been in Flossenbürg, I have been impressed by how everyone seems, at least on the outside, totally unbiased and open. I have often thought about how I would react if relatives or even I, myself, had been imprisoned somewhere. After my release, would I have the strength and courage to go back there? The fact that the survivors did exactly that is a sign of the excellent work being done here, both at the concentration camp memorial and at the supporting association. You have to admire that.

Traenckner-Probst: I think it depends on the personalities involved. With the founding members and Jörg Skriebeleit, who in his own way and with the idea of a lively remembrance, created a completely new concentration camp memorial.

Schroeter: I often walk around the region and take photographs. Then I show these pictures to various organisations in Nuremberg and tell them about the area. And I always

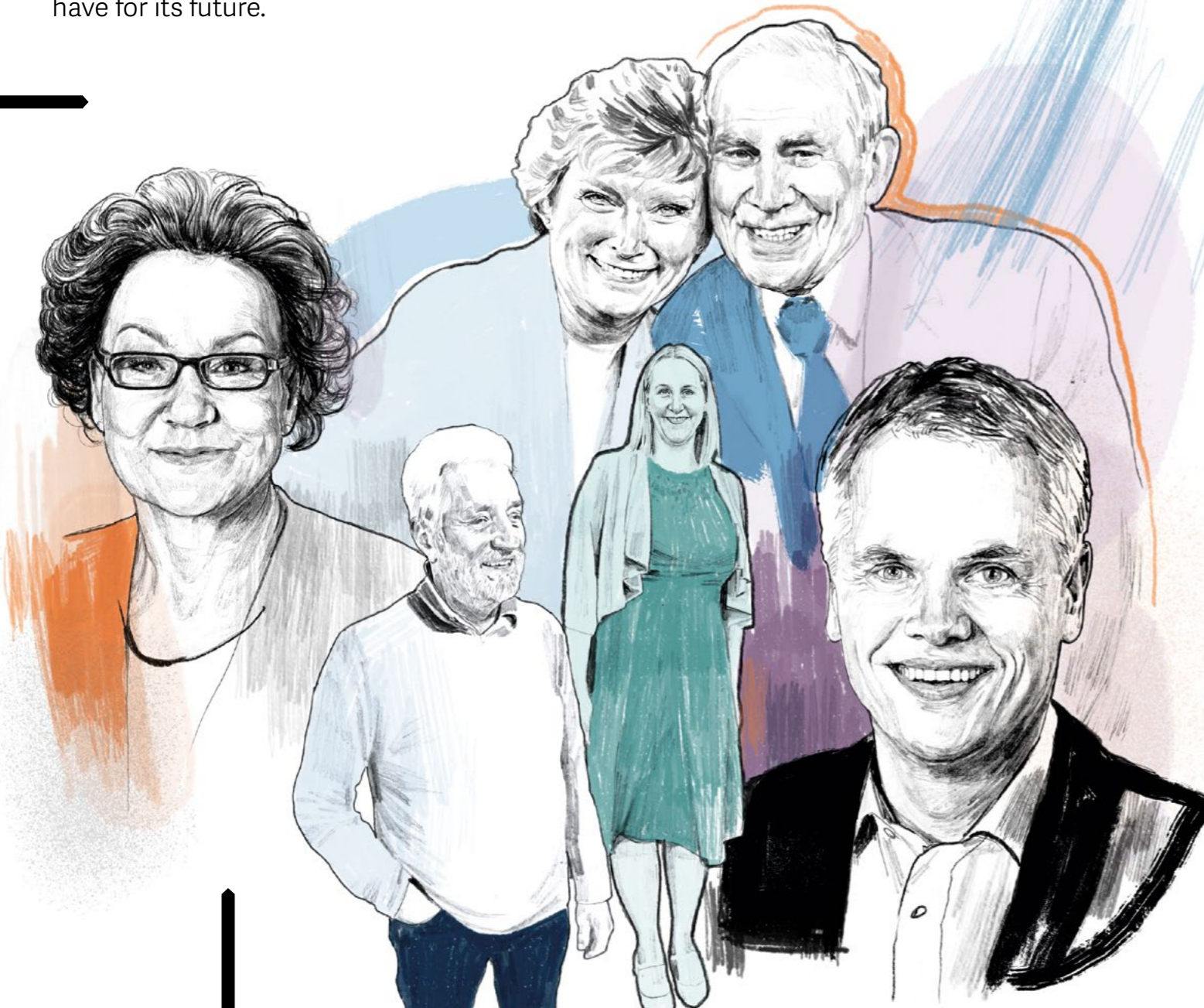
come across the work of the Flossenbürg concentration camp memorial with its many former subcamps scattered around Franconia and beyond. There is often regional commitment, but it probably wouldn't exist without this motor from Flossenbürg. That is the effect that this concentration camp memorial has, and so the supporting association has it too, which I have noticed recently, ever since I moved to Nuremberg and am around here a lot.

Schötz: For many years, the association organised the Saturday evening event at the liberation celebrations. This became a kind of family get-together. Those Saturday evenings were always something special for me, especially the joy of seeing everyone again, the former prisoners and their families. I think that's a very important thing when you think of the association. For me, the way the concentration camp memorial looks and works today is nothing short of a miracle.

Friedrich Peterhans conducted this interview with association members, Marie Luise Deyerling, Brigitte Hese, Isabel Traenckner-Probst, Bernhard Neumann, Karlhermann Schötz and Heinrich Schroeter.

VOICES FROM THE FLOSSENBÜRG COMMUNITY

A large number of people are connected to the concentration camp memorial in many different ways. We affectionately call them the 'Flossenbürg community'. On anniversaries, people like to look back, but they also want to look ahead. We have collected voices from the 'Flossenbürg community' to find out how they view the concentration camp memorial and what hopes or visions they have for its future.



A Plea for Remembrance

The concentration camp memorial is dedicated to remembering the past, commemorating the victims and reminding people to be vigilant. Its blood-soaked walls show the absurdity of wars and the inconceivable atrocities that people are capable of committing. Like my father and the other former prisoners, I hope that the concentration camp memorial will be preserved. I hope that the team will continue to painstakingly pursue the goals formulated in 1995 and work hard to honour the memory of all those who were imprisoned, humiliated or murdered in this terrible camp.

A memorial has to be made to 'speak' through intensive educational work, and by clarifying the difference between reality and propaganda, 'vital information' and 'fake news'. Most visitors do not take part in guided tours and rarely read the explanatory texts. That's why it is crucial to emphasise the actual events. That is what people remember and this memory must never end.

Solange Dekeyser, relative

Encounters, Friendship, Remembrance ...

I see the concentration camp memorial as a place with the important task of keeping alive the memory of the terrible crimes of National Socialism for present and future generations. But it should also remind us of how important it is to actively stand up for democracy and the rule of law. Today, the concentration camp memorial is a place that brings people together. The meeting ten years ago on the 70th anniversary of the liberation, when I welcomed a delegation of survivors for the first time as mayor, was particularly formative for me. I was unsure how to address these people, but the warmth of my guests quickly reassured me. I was deeply moved by the conversations, the laughter and singing. The fact that we treat each other with such respect both then and now is thanks to the 25 years of work at the concentration camp memorial. This has led to many friendships as well as a partnership between the towns of Flossenbürg and Wervik. It is going to be a great challenge to keep people – especially young people – interested in such places, through innovative ideas and by maintaining a lively concentration camp memorial.

Thomas Meiler, Mayor of Flossenbürg

We Must Not Forget What Happened – But Life Goes On!

The concentration camp memorial reminds us every day of how important it is to preserve history and learn from it. The memory of the victims of National Socialism is kept alive here; it takes a stand against forgetting. As a direct neighbour of the memorial site, I find it very important that life continue to take place around it. No one can turn back time and change what happened, but we can prevent the crimes of that time from happening again.

Laura Kindl, neighbour to the memorial site

An Indispensable Site of Remembrance and Political Education

For me, the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial is an indispensable site of remembrance and political education. Current national and international political events make it urgently clear how important it is to have active, scientifically-accompanied remembrance of the Holocaust. For me personally, the meetings and conversations with survivors and their testimonies have been and continue to be meaningful and very emotional experiences that touch me deeply. I am grateful that the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial uses modern, interactive forms of remembrance that also appeal to younger generations and help them to see and hear the survivors' accounts. I hope that the memorial site follows along this path of remembrance and continues to be interesting and relevant in the digital age. There is no question that the political education of future generations is becoming increasingly important. The memorial site's contribution to this is indispensable and already being used actively by the US Army.

*Susanne Bartsch, Press and Public Relations –
US Army Garrison Bavaria*

Past and Present – Learning from History

The memorial site as a whole is a very important place to remember one of the darkest chapters of our recent German history. Over the last 25 years, a modern and dignified memorial site was created from the relics of a concentration camp. With the new presentation of information and cooperation with companies, schools and institutions, intensive work is being done to promote exchange. For me personally, the decision to open an integrative café in the former SS Casino in 2015 had the most far-reaching impact. This required a great deal of courage and commitment, since it was not without controversy. The initial scepticism, however, was eventually dispelled and the entire project has been a success.

It is currently more important than ever to draw attention to the crimes committed by the Nazi dictatorship. After all, there are patterns in society and politics right now that are

THESE GROUNDS DEMAND ENERGY AND COMMITMENT

similar to what we had 100 years ago. We have to be very careful that history does not repeat itself. The memorial site must remain a place of remembrance, but also a place for exchange and international understanding.

Josef Kastner, former workshop supervisor of HPZ Irchenrieth

Place of Remembrance, Place of Reflection

The memorial site has a paradoxical appeal. For me, it is a place of remembrance in the very original sense, a moral authority and an institution that serves the lasting, thoughtful memory of the crimes and their victims, with its rooms, grounds and building re-utilisation, situated at the end of a beautiful valley in the Upper Palatinate Forest. Prisoners such as Fridolín Macháček and Shelomo Selinger have described the contrast that exists between the unchecked, sadistic violence and the beauty of the surroundings. It is a beauty that hurts. The memorial site still has to withstand this tension and has turned it into a great place for exchange, dialogue and reflection.

It is a place where, thanks to many committed people, surprising, good ideas are constantly emerging. These are reflected in exhibitions, workshops and events. I would like to stress the intellectual effort behind this. Think of the exhibition projects on the aforementioned Shelomo Selinger or on so-called 'asocials' and 'professional criminals' in the exhibition 'The Disavowed' (2024). These are very important collaborations with which the memorial site surpasses itself. For the future, I hope that the memorial site will continue to provide an impetus for debates and to position itself firmly in controversies as it has from the very start, and that it will continue to conquer new areas – in an international setting, with untapped visitor groups, across society.

Isabella von Treskow, Professor of French and Italian Literature and Cultural Studies – University of Regensburg

From Coexistence to Togetherness

As a newcomer to Flossenbürg, one is confronted less with the memorial site than with prejudices and questions from friends and visitors. Around 10 to 15 years ago, people said 'how could you move to Flossenbürg?', but now they

appreciate the town's development. The development of the memorial site has played a significant role in this. Until the 1990s, it was seen as something between a cemetery and a park. Today it is a memorial site of international standing with an open, sometimes unsparing, but always factual, explanatory and contemporary modern presentation. The memorial site has shifted from a foreign body on the outskirts of the town to an integral part of the town. Not just from a geographical standpoint, but above all from a cultural one. Through the museum café and special uses in the DEST building, it has been possible to address, involve and include local associations and residents. And that is exactly what I would like to see for the shared future of the town and memorial site, also with regard to the former quarry site: preservation, development and integration.

Hans-Peter Ottlinger, Flossenbürg resident

This Remembrance Site Remains a Labour of Love

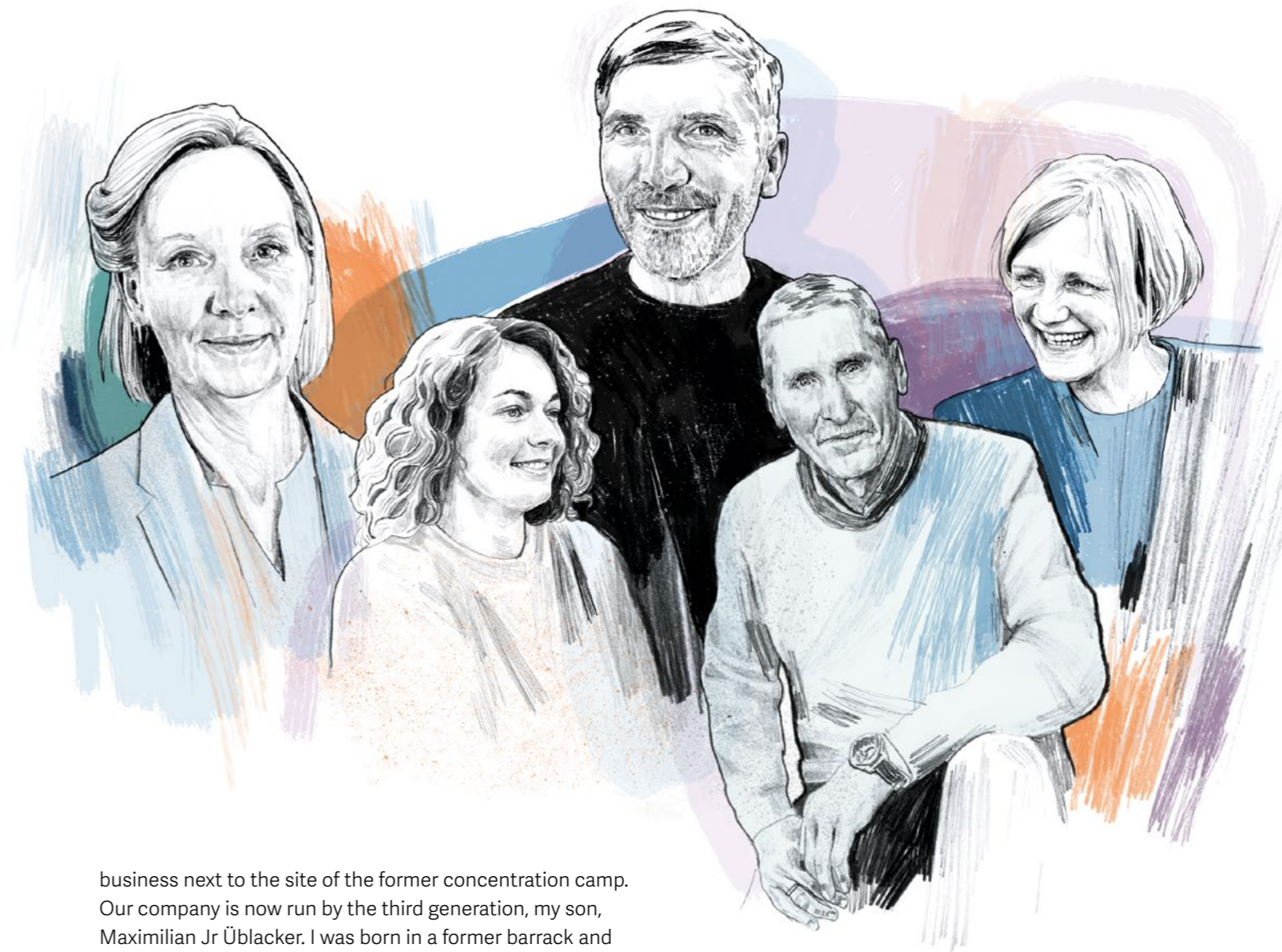
As an architect at the Amberg-Sulzbach State Building Authority, remembrance work for the Flossenbürg Memorial has been part of my area of responsibility for almost 25 years. At our office in Weiden, a dedicated team of colleagues – and specifically my colleague, the architect Klaus Koch, deserves special mention here – has taught us to immerse ourselves in the work of remembrance, to understand it and to work together with an outstanding team at the memorial site to plan, renovate and implement structural measures. For me, the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial as a remembrance site has become a task and a mission, a source of knowledge and a labour of love – not least of all because it allowed me to meet contemporary witnesses. And also because I have seen what committed work there can achieve.

I hope that the memorial site will continue to perform the work of remembrance into the future with understanding, commitment and emotion. This memory must not be erased. In his unique way, Miloš Volf, former inmate, contemporary witness and member of the scientific advisory board, pleaded for this in one of his last speeches. And that also remains.

Elisabeth Bücherl-Ber, Architect – Amberg-Sulzbach State Building Authority

New Home

This place has a special meaning for my family. My parents, Max and Maria Üblacker, came from Neuhäusl in Bohemia and from Paulusbrunn and, as expellees, were housed here in the former camp after World War II. They found a new home in Flossenbürg and later founded a scrap and metal



business next to the site of the former concentration camp. Our company is now run by the third generation, my son, Maximilian Jr Üblacker. I was born in a former barrack and grew up in the camp in the postwar period with my two siblings. In 1989, my wife and I built our own house, right next to today's museum café. We have watched the memorial site develop over the decades. Our relationship has always been marked by respect and friendly neighbourliness – both with the memorial site and with the people who work there. I would like to mention Jörg Skriebeleit as a representative of these people.

The Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial is already doing great work for future generations. Topics such as flight and expulsion are more relevant than ever. An exhibition about the expellees in Flossenbürg could show how these people lost their homes and had to start over again. This would help to better connect the past with the present. The town of Flossenbürg has already addressed this issue and taken the first steps – a good basis for further projects.

Maximilian Üblacker, neighbour to the memorial site

Remembrance as a Chance for the Future

I still vividly remember my first visit to the memorial site: it was part of a university seminar and thus far too late for my liking, as such an excursion should really have taken place during my school years. Even today, it annoys me that

educational policy made it possible to progress through school up to the Abitur without ever setting foot in a former concentration camp. What I quickly learned there: it is often very cold at the Flossenbürg Memorial, but it is definitely not a cold place.

In many ways, I see the memorial site as a place where people meet, both together and even against each other. These encounters take place in the here and now. They integrate the past as much as the future. For me, it is a place full of emotions, where I dare to laugh, cry and everything in between; a place that does not only know silence. These grounds demand energy and commitment, an active engagement with a heritage that has to be preserved. We can learn from the mistakes of the past here and use this to develop new values and action for the future. I hope that this place never fades away and that there will always be people who fill it with life and meaning.

Anna-Elena Schüler, student of Public History and Cultural Education – University of Regensburg

TO THE POINT



Monika Grötsch has been a tour guide at the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial since 2012. She helps organise workshops for the education department and develop seminar concepts. She explains what she values most about the tours.

Given how long I've been working as a tour guide, one might think that at some point it becomes boring. After all, the content remains essentially the same. The visitors, however, are what changes with each group: Guided tours for adults and young people are varied because the participants come to us with very personal stories. Not only older visitors, but increasingly also young visitors bring with them experiences of war, flight, expulsion and loss, or they have a perpetrator in the family. Most of the teenagers think of National Socialism as something far away and long gone, mostly because there is no one left in their family who experienced the Nazi era. It is our job as tour guides to raise awareness and establish connections. This is what makes my work so exciting and interesting.

The majority of visitors who come to Flossenbürg are students from different types of schools and different regions of Germany. Most schools book a two-hour tour, during which I accompany them around the grounds

and through parts of the exhibition. There is one station in particular that I always visit with groups because, in my opinion, it is the centrepiece of the memorial site: the biographies of the prisoners on display in the cellar of the former laundry building. Each biography includes a photograph of the person portrayed – often from before their imprisonment – and a text about their life, beginning with the time before their persecution, covering their imprisonment in the camp and the time after the war. The students independently select biographies that speak to or move them. They often select someone from their own native country, as many of the visitors have roots outside of Germany. We discuss what the prisoners have in common and what makes them different. We also talk about the prisoners' lives after the war. How did a survivor fare? How were they able to start a new life? We reflect a lot on this question. Of course, some students in the school classes hold problematic socio-political views. But I have repeatedly found that everyone finds valuable ideas to ponder in this part of the exhibition where we work with biographies.

After we leave this very intensive station, I take the group outside. Throughout the tour, the prisoners whom we learned about from the biographies accompany us through quotes that are read aloud. Sometimes after the tour, participants explore the biographies of individual prisoners further, for example through the memorial's website. The in-depth conversations with students during the tours are especially meaningful to me. Their different approaches and interest in the biographies are why the work continues to be varied and fascinating for me.



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