



It is a sign: We people from Geislingen are thinking of you“

National Socialism The Geislinger initiative “remembering - honouring - reconciling“ presents new homepage about concentration satellite camp. It is intended to be a digital memorial.

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translation: Eva Kerner*

www.kz-geislingen.de provides information about the KZ satellite camp.

Until the 1980s nobody in Geislingen wanted to face the fact that there was a satellite camp of the Alsatian concentration camp Natzweiler - Struthof in the town. Since then much has changed. In 2015 and 2018 memorials at the site of the former satellite camp and in front of WMF were added to the memorial Wounded Head, erected at cemetery Heiligenaecker in 1984. Furthermore, commemorations and silent marches are organised.

Since yesterday - the anniversary of Reichspogromnacht on November 9, 1938 - there is a homepage which recalls the history of the satellite camp and its prisoners. This homepage was created by the initiative “remembering - honouring - reconciling“ of the Protestant Alliance in Geislingen in cooperation with other engaged volunteers. The purpose: “We want to tell the story of the satellite camp and inspire people to pay attention to that topic“, says Matthias Lotz, chairman of the Alliance, at the presentation of the homepage at WMF’s communication center.

The girls and women have escaped from the extermination camp Auschwitz through forced labor in Geislingen, Lotz explains. But he also emphasizes: „Nevertheless, Geislingen was like hell for them because they were tortured beyond the limits of their capacity.“ The idea to create a „digital memorial“ with the website www.kz-geislingen.de was born in 2020 after a planned student exchange with Israel and a commemoration event in Geislingen had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. “It is a sign: We people from Geislingen think of you“, says Lotz.

The website not only portrays the history of the satellite camp but also tells the biographies of the surviving prisoners (Lotz: “This is the heart the website.“) The

memorials in Geislingen are presented as well as projects of remembering and reconciling. Much attention to detail was paid to the construction of the website, says Lotz. It was mainly Eva Kerner from the initiative who put lots of time into the homepage - whereas time and labor are unimportant for her, she emphasizes: "Remembering the girls and women is more important."

It has always been the concern of the initiative, not only to focus on the past but also to build a bridge to the present and future by dealing with the past and maintaining contact to the survivors and the relatives - following the motto of the initiative "remembering - honoring - reconciling". In keeping with this motto this spring, even during the pandemic, the members found a way to meet survivors and their families from all over the world - this time digitally, via Zoom - meeting. Lotz compares the atmosphere to a campfire: "All of us sat there and listened to the stories."

It is also fitting that the content of the homepage is completely translated into English; the texts are thus accessible to all. The website is intended to grow constantly by publishing, among other things, study reports.

WMF is represented by press spokesperson Corinna Laegeler and Stefanie Leiterholt, who is responsible for personnel in the Executive Board. Currently the area in front of the main entrance is reconstructed, Leiterholt explains. The memorial with the names of the forced laborers will certainly stay at its place. „It is clear: This is our history and the memorial is WMF´s commitment against forgetting“, she emphasizes. The homepage as a "digital memorial" is a "very big concern" for WMF.

Rosemarie and Hermann Schneider are happy about these words. The couple from Gingen has significantly contributed to the process of coming to terms with the past by their research in the Israeli Holocaust Memorial Centre Yad Vashem. "It is very, very important for the women and their families that they are not forgotten here in Geislingen, but that we remember them", says Rosemarie Schneider.

The KZ - satellite camp and remembrance work

More than 1000 Jewish girls and women were forced to do forced labor at WMF since 1944 and had to live under the most horrible conditions. Among the prisoners there were at least twelve dead. Any trace is missing about the fate of about 200 prisoners.

The initiative is happy about donations - also to be able to cover the costs of the homepage. Contact information: info@kz-geislingen.de
