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Concentration camp list now complete

Geislingen an der Steige:

Giving numbers a name: That was the concern of Rosemarie and Hermann Schneider from Gingen. They brought the list of 813 women from Israel who had to do forced labor in Geislingen.

Numbers now become people with a name again: Rosemarie and Hermann Schneider from Gingen with the copy of the transport list of the 813 Geislingen forced laborers they came across in Israel.



Photographer: Rainer Lauschke

Shaven, barefoot, feet sore, emaciated - this is how hundreds of Jewish women and girls marched from their barracks camp on Heidenheimer Straße to WMF 70 years ago. More than 800 Jewish girls and women were transported from Auschwitz to Geislingen - to a satellite camp of the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp - from August 1944 to March 1945 and had to do forced labor at WMF for twelve hours a day.

Who were these women? Of the 800 women who were liberated at the end of the war, only 120 names were known so far. It was known that they came mainly from Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. It was not known whether the rest of the names had been lost or whether there would still be a record somewhere. Now these women and girls - previously known merely as numbers - have had their names returned. This is thanks to the commitment of Rosemarie and Hermann Schneider from Gingen.

In a Christian prayer and discussion group, the Schneider couple has been dealing with the subject of Israel for many years. Rosemarie and Hermann Schneider, who have lived in Gingen for ten years, only learned five years ago that there was a concentration camp in Geislingen. Since then, they have not let go of this topic. In February, the two took up a trail on behalf of the Evangelical Alliance Geislingen. They traveled to Israel and visited the Jewish Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem. In the memorial's digital archive, they name the only survivor they know. It becomes the key to all other valuable information: Because here, personalized, all the data belonging to this person is neatly filed - including a "transport list" of 813 female forced laborers from Geislingen, dated

April 11, 1945. "Numbers are now finally becoming people with a name again," says Rosemarie Schneider. In Israel, she and her husband met two survivors of the Geislingen concentration camp. One of the two women, 86-year-old Miryam Sobel, and members of both families will travel from Israel to join the memorial march on May 8.

City archivist praises find as "incredible"

"Unbelievable," says Geislingen city archivist Hartmut Gruber of the Schneiders' find. The found list illuminates a part of Geislingen's town history that until now remained hidden in the dark. The list makes it possible that 70 years after the end of the war "the people who were obliged to do forced labor here have a name." How was that possible? Gruber notes with appreciation that the initiative around Pastor Matthias Lotz and SPD city councilor Hansjürgen Gölz had very good connections.

The list also proves how the concentration camp prisoners were taken away from Geislingen, explains the town historian. Until now, it had been assumed that the women were liberated during transport to Dachau. At that time, the train had suddenly stopped and the SS guards had disappeared shortly before the Americans arrived. "That is not so true," Gruber now realizes. The transport apparently departed for the Dachau Allach concentration camp outpost on April 11, ten days before U.S. troops entered Geislingen, and was declared as a "delivery." "The list was probably compiled one or two days earlier," Gruber said.

The name of a concentration camp inmate known in Geislingen also appears on the list: Gertrud Müller, who had already reported on her imprisonment in the Geislingen concentration camp 20 years ago. The communist from Feuerbach was one of seven political prisoners in the Geislingen concentration camp. What the city of Geislingen will now do with the list "is something to think about now," says Gruber. He can imagine that the 813 names will in some way enrich the "Wounded Head" memorial at the Heiligenaecker cemetery.

Memorial march on May 8 in Geislingen

Silent march

On May 8, there will be a memorial march under the title "remembering - honoring - reconciling" in honor of the Jewish women who were prisoners in the concentration satellite camp. Meeting point is at 5 p.m. in Robert-Bosch-Strasse in Geislingen at the Odello company. At 5:30 p.m., the silent march will begin in Robert-Bosch-Strasse and continue to Gate 1 of WMF. Afterwards, an information event will take place in the Jahnhalle. Miryam Sobel from Israel, one of the women who were imprisoned in the concentration camp, will be the guest of honor.

Information event

Following the silent march, at 6:30 p.m., Holocaust survivor Miryam Sobel will talk about her memories of the Geislingen concentration camp. Mayor Frank Dehmer, the Youth Community Council, students of Michelberg High School and City Councilor Dr. Goelz will tell the story of the concentration satellite camp. The choir of the Raetsche cultural workshop performs Jewish songs.

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