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## respectful celebration of liberation

70 years after the end of the war the victims of the KZ-satellite camp in Geislingen were honored with a reception in the townhall of Geislingen, a memorial march (see picture) and a function in Jahnhalle yesterday evening.

The motto of these very emotionally laden events: remembering, honoring, reconciling.

picture: Markus Sontheimer

[link to picture gallery of march and function Jahnhalle Friday evening May 8<sup>th</sup>:  
<http://www.swp.de/geislingen/bilder/cme1215924,1907677> ]

## Never again!

### Geislingen commemorates former concentration camp inmates with march through the city



70 years are not a long time.

This was evident yesterday at the visit of Holocaust survivor Miryam Sobel.

The encounters were touching and brought about memories as well as reconciliation.

picture: Markus Sontheimer

Three generations at the reception: Miryam Sobel with white scarf, to the right her daughter Chani Rieger. Granddaughter Sivan Sobol shakes mayor Frank Dehmer's hand.

More pictures at [www.geislinger-zeitung.de](http://www.geislinger-zeitung.de)

[this is the link to the picture gallery of the reception , Friday morning May 8<sup>th</sup> : <http://www.swp.de/geislingen/bilder/cme1215920,1906688> ]

#### Claudia Burst

**Geislingen.** Miryam Sobel is 88 years old, not even 1.50 meters tall, neat - and has survived Auschwitz and the KZ-satellite camp in Geislingen in World War II.

The old lady has come to Geislingen with her own family members as well as descendants of another concentration camp inmate (Hanna Mann). They were invited by Evangelische Allianz [a network of protestant Christians from various denominations and communities] and financially supported by various businesses - among others by WMF. There the concentration camp inmates had to do forced labor during World War II.

This is about "remembering, honoring, reconciling" and it involves remembering a dark part of the history of Geislingen and actively living reconciliation with a memorial march and a function in [the civic hall] Jahnhalle.

[text in box: GZ topic: end of war]

Senior Mayor Frank Dehmer welcomed the guests with a reception in the townhall, characterizing their visit as an honor. “We are aware of the fact that this visit is not an ordinary trip for you. We cannot put right what has happened. But reconciliation is important to all of us”, he emphasized before asking the guests to sign the Visitors’ Book.

Miryam Sobel’s son Haim Sobol explained that “the whole thing is complicated, that forgiving is also difficult for us as descendants” and he added: “But we will now close this chapter after 70 years.”

With the help of Eva Kerner from Unterböhringen his sister, Chani Rieger, gave thanks to Rosemarie and Hermann Schneider, whose commitment beforehand had made this visit possible (*we reported*). “It is a mission of humanity, friendship, freedom and peace”, she said and added: “It is our common determination to fulfill this promise: Never again!”

For many Germans the Holocaust is history which belongs to the past and under which a line should be drawn.

70 years is not a long time. This became clear at the latest when the third generation, Miryam Sobel’s granddaughter Sivan Sobol began to speak. “Now I am here where my grandma worked and suffered”. The voice of the approximately 25-year old trembled. And not only she herself, also her listeners had to blink back tears when she related what her grandmother had kept telling her: That she was only 17 when she and her mother came from Auschwitz to Geislingen to the concentration camp. That they had to work 12 hours every day. But Miryam Sobel did not only tell her descendants about the suffering. She also spoke about how a nurse in the concentration camp clinic had warned her that all sick patients were about to be murdered. That she went back to work, burning from fever, which might well have been her luck.

There was a foreman in WMF who secretly gave her a sandwich and an Aspirin every day. “This has probably saved her life”, said Sivan Sobol. At the end of her speech the emotions in the room were tangible. Personal conversations between the guests followed.

For example, Mordi Zissmann, the 42-year-old grandson of Hanna Mann, spoke about how he and his mother Malka had been to Lindenschule and had talked to ninth-graders about his grandmother’s experiences. “She has never said anything to me about this time. Only 17 years ago I was able to persuade her to tell me what had happened”, - and she had always tried to hide the horror. Mordi Zissmann thinks the students of Lindenschule had asked interesting questions. Questions that show how difficult it is to empathize with people of that time.

**Info** The GZ will cover the march of remembrance and the function at Jahnhalle thoroughly on Monday.

COMMENT • KZ SATELLITE CAMP

*Lest we forget*

Frightening! Recently we received a letter from a GZ-reader from the USA, which sneered at the fuss put up in Geislingen about the KZ satellite camp. He himself, he wrote in this email, remembers how he as a 12-year old had seen the women walking through the city happily chatting. Nothing had suggested that these forced laborers were doing poorly.

We did not publish this letter - which does not happen often. Because it leaves us stunned and angry when 70 years after the end of the war there is still denial. It is rather sad to hear voices that demand to leave it at that and finally forget considering NSU [National Socialist Underground, a terror group] and Pegida-movement [Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West].

No, we will not forget! On the contrary, we and our children's children will have to remember what happened during this unspeakable section of German history and here, in this placid little town, today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. This we owe not only the victims of the past but also ourselves today.

And part of this quest against forgetting is the plaque of honor for the courageous women of Altenstadt [who dismantled tank barriers so that the US forces could enter the city without bloodshed] as well as yesterday's memorial function and silent march. Let's finally understand: this camp was a reality in this city. There is nothing to gloss over, to forge or to forget.

And when looking into an increasingly brutalizing world, in which political leaders cause blood and thunder, in which marauding gangs oppress, torture, torment and lynch others in the name of religion, while the so-called civilization accepts Guantanamo and hypocritically watches thousands of people threatened existentially drown in the oceans, in this world of the present age "remembering, honoring and reconciling" is more than important. For at least it is a tiny spark of hope for a better world.

As a medium we will accompany such hours of commemoration, we will report, remember and also take the initiative so that things will be colorful and peaceful here, for example with our cross-media project "world in a city". Furthermore, we will always ensure keenly and critically that there will never again be tendencies in Geislingen which brought misery and disaster across the globe a little over 80 years ago.

MICHAEL RAHNFIELD