



Year-end Circular Letter to Survivors, Relatives of Nazi Persecutees, and Friends of Our Memorial Work

Dear Madam, dear Sir, dear Friends,

For the first time, this review of the Foundation's events and activities in 2022 does not come from the pen of Prof. Dr Detlef Garbe, the long-time director of the memorial site and the Foundation's Board of Directors. Indeed, it is a great honour for me to take over his office following his official retirement and farewell on 30 June 2022!

In 2022, we found ourselves experiencing a turning point when, on February 24, Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine confronted us with unimagined challenges. How do we as institutions steeped in remembrance culture respond in the face of a catastrophe occurring just a few hundred miles to the east of us? The repercussions of the war impact our work, too. We try to help, for example, by providing digital lectures as a means of informing people about the situation of the survivors of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp and by supporting their relatives. Scholarship programmes have enabled us to co-operate with four Ukrainian colleagues. Together with our archive staff, they have been processing archive collections with an orientation towards Eastern Europe. Along with a colleague from International Memorial Moscow who had left the country we were also able to stage the exhibition 'More than mere politeness. Gifts presented to guests as part of the Hamburg visitors' programme for former forced labourers'.

After two years of pandemic, events marking the 77th anniversary of the liberation were finally able to take place on site at Neuengamme once again and in Neustadt in the Bay of Lübeck. Associations of the Amicale Internationale de Neuengamme (AIN) as well as their companions travelled to the venues in large numbers. It was also very moving to see the placards in memory of former prisoners of Neuengamme Concentration Camp set up at the 'Space to Remember, Connection and Support'. More than forty relatives gathered with their mementos. We are also most grateful for the visits by the contemporary witnesses Dita Kraus, Helga Melmed, Natan Grossmann and Marianne Wilke, with whom we were able to hold public discussions.

The 8th Future of Remembrance Forum, held in the run-up to the annual conference of the Amicale Internationale de Neuengamme (AIN) on November 16 and 17, provided an insight into current remembrance activities involving international participation. The history of prisoners from France and Belgium was one of the focal points. The participatory educational project 'Opening Up Perspectives – Sharing Stories', implemented between 2021 and 2022, was also presented as a reminder of National Socialism and the Second World War from the perspective of people with central and eastern European family histories. However, these commemorative days were overshadowed by the vandalism committed at the memorial to the victims from Meensel-Kiezegem. While we were appalled by this incident, it merely



strengthened our resolve to continue our remembrance work with all the resources at our disposal.

After the repeated closures during the Covid pandemic, visitor numbers were up again at the memorial site from May 2022 onwards, and our analogue educational offers are now once again available in full. For now, we hope we will be able to navigate the difficult times of the energy crisis and of rising inflation that lie ahead. Indeed, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our numerous sponsors and supporters, who have helped us through this difficult phase.

In 2022 we were also able to hold our international work camp on the theme of 'Looking Back, Around and Ahead – 40 Years of International Work Camps'. In the area of online memorial work, we opened up a new avenue. Indeed, since January 2022 the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial has been part of the 'Tiktok – Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative' with its very own channel, which subsequently received the Shimon Peres Award. So you can now follow us using this resource, too: @neuengamme.memorial. We also launched a digital project that allows young people to engage with the history of the memorial at Bullenhuser Damm using an innovative format.

In 2022, we successfully brought several major projects to a good conclusion and broke new ground. Indeed, in September, our Foundation took over the trusteeship of the Stadthaus Historical Site, following a protracted tussle for the site. This means that in 2023 we will be working on the new opening of an expanded historical site in the inner city area. Alongside the existing exhibition it will showcase smaller special exhibitions as well as events, group-based educational work, and joint ventures with civil society initiatives. On November 16, the multimedia project '#WaswillstDutun?' presented its online exhibition on family history approaches to the Nazi past, along with all the relevant educational materials.

On October 30, the exhibition 'Death Is Always Among Us. The Deportations to Riga and the Holocaust in German-Occupied Latvia' opened at the Latvian Occupation Museum in Riga. The exhibition itself is set to go on show at Hamburg City Hall in early 2023. The exhibition 'Between Coercion and Concentration Camp. The Poor and the Marginalised in Hamburg during the Nazi Era' at Hamburg City Hall, which had been postponed from January to June/July because of the pandemic, attracted a great deal of attention. The presentation of the exhibition was accompanied by discussions with descendants of the victims and an extensive theme-based programme.

Several publication projects were also completed. Two catalogues provide documentation relating to the last two aforementioned exhibitions; the brochure 'Warehouse G at Dessauer Ufer' was published in collaboration with a research group from the University of Hamburg; and Issue 3 of the 'Contributions to the History of Nazi Persecution' series was released on the topic of 'Victims of Nazi persecution after the liberation', along with the book 'The Electrician.



'My Survival as a Czech Jewish Woman from 1933 to 1945' by Franci Rabinek Epstein. 2022 also saw the publication of three volumes in the 'Neuengammer Kolloquien' series: the anthology 'Documenting and Exhibiting Deportations' on the planned Hannoverscher Bahnhof Documentation Centre; the anthology 'Discovery Learning. Places of Remembrance of Nazi Crimes'; and a double biography on Walter Filsinger, a guard, and Fritz Bringmann, a prisoner at Neuengamme Concentration Camp entitled *No Justice*.

Since a new location for the planned documentation centre denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof had to be found and its opening postponed to 2026, we launched the programme of temporary 'interventions' at the historical site. We were able to show the photo exhibition 'Deported into the Unknown' on the destinations of Nazi deportations and the exhibition '(Last) Signs of Life' featuring postcards from the deportation destinations.

This year we sadly had to bid a final farewell to many survivors close to our hearts. We wish to take this opportunity to evoke the memory of the deceased: Dr Hans Gaertner, Teresa Stiland, Roger Cassagne, Erna Mayer, Margot Heumann, Kamila Siegllová, Liselotte Ivry, Pierre Vignes, Paula Schemiavitz, Aron Gross, and the recently deceased Hédi Fried. We also sorely miss our colleagues and companions Ursula Suhling, Dr Detlev Landgrebe, and Petra Vollmer.

On behalf of all our staff, we wish you all a healthy and safe start to the new year 2023, in the hope that we may look forward to a year of peace!

Dr Oliver von Wrochem
Director, Foundation of Hamburg Memorials and Learning Centres, and Head of the
Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial

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