

End-of-year newsletter to survivors, relatives of victims of Nazi persecution, and friends of our memorial work

Dear ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

The end of 2023 is overshadowed by two events that have deeply impacted our work: in response to the Hamas massacres on October 7, 2023, Israel is at war and the people of Ukraine are experiencing their second winter at war and partly under Russian occupation. Our foremost solidarity and concern are directed towards the survivors of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp and their relatives in Israel and Ukraine, but also towards our cooperation partners in both countries.

At the same time, the rise in anti-Semitism and the increasingly public displays of right-wing extremism and historical revisionism in Germany challenges our work. Against the backdrop of educating about Nazi crimes, we continue to take a firm stance against any forms of group-focused misanthropy and trivialization of National Socialism in the present.

The commemoration of the liberation of the prisoners of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp on May 3, 2023, was a positive highlight of the year. We would like to thank our guests of honor, survivors Dita Kraus, Livia Fränkel, Elisabeth Masur-Kischinowski, Natan Grossmann, and Barbara Piotrowska, for celebrating this day of liberation with us. Other events to mark the anniversary included a storytelling cafe, where young adults engaged in conversation with contemporary witnesses. In Neustadt, representatives of the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme joined the town's public in remembering the prisoners who died during the bombings of the Cap Arcona and Thielbek ships, which held concentration camp prisoners, in Neustadt Bay. We were also able to welcome relatives of Neuengamme Concentration Camp prisoners from Ukraine to the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial. These encounter projects are invaluable to our remembrance work.

On July 3, after several months of renovations, we were able to reopen the Stadthaus Remembrance Site as a new branch of our foundation. Since then, it has presented new possibilities for remembrance and education. In addition to the permanent exhibition, descendants can now design "memory boxes" to commemorate their family members who were interrogated or imprisoned in Stadthaus. Hamburg Initiatives can also present projects in one of Stadthaus' display windows, the first being the "Controversies Surrounding Stadthaus as a Place of Remembrance." Educational programming, special exhibitions, readings, and lectures have also taken place in the space.

A milestone for the regional culture of remembrance is the "Hamburg Memorial Concept," which our former Foundation Director Prof. Dr. Detlef Garbe developed together with me, his successor, and in close consultation with Hamburg Initiatives. The concept contains a wide range of suggestions for strengthening the current and future tasks of memorials and the culture of remembrance in Hamburg and was adopted by the Hamburg Senate in September.

At denk.mal Hannoverscher Bahnhof, planning for the construction of a new documentation center about the deportations from Hamburg began in 2023. As early as January, the exhibition "Death Is Always Among Us" was shown in Hamburg City Hall, which focused on the deportations to Riga and the Holocaust in Latvia and was opened by survivors and children of deportees from Hamburg. Beginning in April, the exhibition "Why Here?" showed excerpts from the history and commemoration in Lohsepark and from September the exhibition "More Than a Memorial" was on display. Relatives reported on the significance of the memorial site for both them and their families.

Further exhibitions included, on the 90th anniversary of the "Reichstag Fire Decree," the traveling exhibition "Prelude to Terror" on early concentration camps, such as the Fuhlsbüttel Concentration Camp in Hamburg, which was conceived together with other memorial sites in Germany, was shown

at the Museum of Hamburg History. September 4, 2023, also marked the 90th anniversary of the opening of the Fuhlsbüttel Concentration Camp. We commemorated this with many cooperation partners in the Hamburg-Nord district office with a reading of testimonies by imprisoned opponents of the regime. To mark the anniversary of "Operation Gomorrah" in 1943, the foundation presented its special exhibition "Vor uns lagen nur Trümmer" (In Front of Us Lay Only Rubble), which focused on the experiences of concentration camp prisoners in the destroyed city, at the St. Nikolai Memorial.

In cooperation with the Research Center for Contemporary History in Hamburg and the Hamburg State Center for Political Education, the project "HAMREA. Hamburg rechtsaußen", which focuses on forms of right-wing extremist violence and actions, the special exhibition "Right-Wing Violence After 1945" will open in Hamburg City Hall on January 19, 2024. A doctoral project on the Nazi war economy in the Port of Hamburg was also launched, which aims to provide new insights into economic interdependence and forced labor in National Socialist Hamburg.

As part of our educational work, educational materials on the National Socialist war of extermination and the fate of victims of Nazi persecution from Eastern Europe are being developed in a participatory project. In the international youth work camp, "Refreshing Memory," young people from Vietnam, Mexico, and Azerbaijan, among others, repaired the memorials at the memorial site. The former commandant's house at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial is now regularly opened to visitors. Scholarship holders from the Foundation and historians from Ukraine and from the organization Memorial International, now Memorial Future, have set up the project room "Persecutees of National Socialism from Eastern Europe" there.

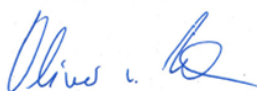
At the 9th "Future of Remembrance" forum in November, we were able to discuss family history remembrance in international contexts and the significance of history in the present with many relatives from various countries, including Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Poland.

Two new memorials were inaugurated in the memorial grove of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial - the memorial initiated by the Spanish Amicale in memory of the victims of the Spanish Civil War, 'Red Spaniards' and members of the International Brigades, and a memorial from the municipality of Staphorst (Netherlands) commemorating the raid in August 1944. We were also honored to welcome delegations from Murat (France), Putten (Netherlands), Denmark, and Belgium, among others.

In 2023, long-serving colleagues retired from the foundation and new colleagues for important management positions were also found. With the team now complete, the foundation can face the challenges ahead together.

Unfortunately, we also had to say goodbye to many people close to us this year. We would like to remember the deceased here, the survivors and contemporary witnesses Karl Pajuk, Marian Hawling, Stefania Bajer, Thérèse Boudier, Ivan Moscovich, Anna Puchajda, Roger Manceau, Nachum Rotenberg, Adrianus Anthony van Lieburg, François H.M. Raveau, Marianne Wilke, and Erika Estis, as well as the important supporters and companions of our memorial work Heiner Schultz, Jürgen Köhler and Marko Knudsen.

On behalf of all our employees, I wish you all a safe and healthy start to the new year and that we can look forward to more peaceful and carefree times!



Prof. Dr. Oliver von Wrochem, Hamburg, December 2023
Chairman of the Foundation and Director of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial