

Opening Ceremony of the Historical Site Adlerwerke

25 March 2022



Greeting note by Gudrun Schmidt

Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945

Dear Dr. Hartwig, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

We are all very pleased, to welcome you all on this special evening. By today's opening of the „Historical site of the Adlerwerke: factory - concentration camp - slave labour“ a blank space within the culture of remembrance will be at long last be filled up in the city of Frankfurt.. About the subject of Forced Labour and the concentration camp Katzbach in the middle of the town and the crimes committed to the afflicted people, for too long silence has existed. After the visit of the two Katzbach Survivors Sigmund Swistak and Andrzej Branecki in 2010 with us at the Studienkreis, no one would have thought, that it would take another twelve years, until their wish of a place of remembrance inside the building became reality.

Our gratitude we would like to express to these, who have fought for many years and partly since decades relentlessly for the establishment of such a memorial and educational location. For this we thank especially the Förderverein, who forwarded us as the provider, and especially you, dear Ms. Hartwig to have set the course, so the undertaking could be realized.

Together - Kulturdezernat, Förderverein and Studienkreis - we have worked out a model of cooperation, which makes sure through an administrative board and an advisory board, how to continue developing the work of the memorial site. Through the advisory board more civil organizations and individuals in the neighborhood as well in the general city will be included, which is especially important for us. The impressive initiative from last Saturday at the river Main, where 1.616 individuals with name-plates remembered the fate of the Katzbach-prisoners, shows, how a participative culture of remembrance can today mobilize and draw in many.

With the provision of the running of the „Geschichtsort Adlerwerke“ we as Studienkreis build on the intentions of the founders, to work against the suppression and oblivion, which shaped the German society after the war and which partially continues till today. Our assignment „Research, Remember, Impart“ is as important today as it was then and has won more importance against the backdrop of today's political developments.

Antisemitism, racism, xenophobia and right-wing radicalism have gained massively during the last years, racial aggressions and murders have been committed. The crimes and the atrocities of the Nazi-regime have been disowned, belittled or exploited. As less and less eye witnesses are still alive, who can authentically report from their experiences, other approaches must be made possible. The historic site with the direct view of the tower, in which the concentration camp Katzbach was located, is now a possibility for visitors - especially young people - to get involved with this part of the history. And with this the archives of the Studienkreis can be used directly, as there are many books and documents (for instance interviews or questionnaires of slave laborers) collected.

The fate of the prisoners in the KZ Katzbach has a connection to the subject of resistance. Our internet project „Memorials Europe 1933-1945) widens the view of the history of the NS and the resistance above Germany, we are just preparing the publication of memorials in Poland.

The historical site is meant to organize as a participational and democratic memorial work. With this the Studienkreis has a long experience, which we want to bring in. With the mixture of full-time and voluntary work and know-how, through transgenerational work of students, employed persons, and pensioniers, through the collaboration of initiatives and groups, we have gained positive experiences und this is also in the concept of the historical site.

The provision of running Katzbach is a big challenge for the Studienkreis and means more work and commitment from us all. But we are looking forward to this very much and will as Studienkreis Verein - board members, full time and voluntary colleagues- do the utmost to bring the historical site to a big success.

The historical site Adlerwerke - factory - concentration camp - slave labor will be an active place for debate with history, specially for young people. They will take something with them - for the Now and for the morrow. The memory and the remembrance of sufferings of those, who had to work in this Adlerwerke as slave laborers, died and were murdered, will be an important part of this work.

I thank you for your attention.