

Message of the Deputy President of the Region Mrs. Petra Rudszuck

Learning from the history, taking responsibility for the Nazi dictatorship and promoting the establishment of a historical consciousness belongs to a modern remembrance in our society today. The detailed results from the research on individual aspects of the Nazi time, however, often give the impression that we now already know all about the Nazi era, that there were no new findings and it was now enough with dealing with the past, as mainly Right-wing populist parties want us to believe. In particular, regional historical research is important to make it clear that persecution and crimes during the Third Reich were clearly visible in every social sphere. The argument that one knew nothing about all of this can thus be permanently weakened. With the Ahlem memorial, the Region of Hannover takes responsibility for the representation and reworking of this dark chapter of German history and, as a regional example, creates a connection to superordinate themes of national socialism.

The "phenomenon of forced labor" still belongs to the less explored aspects of the Nazi era. That is why it is important to promote regional research and make it clear how much slave laborers and forced laborers were not only integrated for obtaining essential war production, but also in the local supply of the population in German society of the last years of World War II. Without the forced labor worker's deportation to Germany, the Nazi state would have been collapsed economically.

The Nazi regime used prisoners of war and forced laborers from all occupied areas of Europe as workers. The working conditions were very different. In some countries, after the liberation,

people also threatened prosecution as Nazi collaborators. Countless former forced laborers returned to their homelands and were traumatized or incapacitated because of the catastrophic working conditions, and spent the rest of their lives in poverty and disease. The impact of these experiences of war also affects the whole family – the following generations suffer from the experiences of their parents and grandparents. Thus, the end of the war meant no end to suffering and exclusion for the affected persons and families. Therefore, it is important to close gaps in research and to work through individual fates to enable mourning and perhaps even reconciliation.

For this reason, the present publication of the working group “Urban History of Burgdorf” is so important, not only for an overall description of the history of Burgdorf, but also for the Region of Hannover as an important example of voluntary work for the memory of the fates of individuals and families who otherwise would be forgotten. Thus, they are brought out of the "shadow of oblivion" and, in the context of current world-political developments, should also remind us that there are never winners in the war - with the exception of the weapon-producing industries.

My heartfelt thanks go to the authors, who have adopted a personal commitment to this unpopular topic, and made it possible to publish another important regional-historical contribution within the context of the Ahlem memorial series.