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Das mehrsprachige Webportal publiziert fortlaufend Informationen zur historisch-politischen Bildung in Schulen, Gedenkstätten und anderen Einrichtungen zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Schwerpunkte bilden der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg sowie die Folgegeschichte in den Ländern Europas bis zu den politischen Umbrüchen 1989.

Dabei nimmt es Bildungsangebote in den Fokus, die einen Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte herausstellen und bietet einen Erfahrungsaustausch über historisch-politische Bildung in Europa an.

## **STATEMENT**

**delivered at Hagenow, Germany, on 8 May 1945**

**at public burial service for 144 dead uncovered**

**at Wöbbelin Concentration Camp**

*Public burial services were held in Ludwigslust, Hagenow, and Schwerin on 8 - 9 May 1945 for victims of German persecution who died in a concentration camp situated at Wöbbelin. The short address which follows was delivered in English and German at the Hagenow services. It represents the attitude of the Allies toward the conquered. Allied soldiers are not vindictive, but they are determined to make impossible the reoccurrence of German practices which lead to the development of concentration camps such as the one at Wöbbelin. Let each German consider carefully the wisdom and direction of this address. Let each German understand that regardless of his station in life, he carries a responsibility for helping to create a self-respecting, lawabiding and decent Fatherland.*

### **Statement**

In these open graves lie the emaciated, brutalized bodies of some 144 citizens of many lands. Before they were dragged away from their homes, their livelihoods, to satisfy the insatiable greed and malice; ambition and savagery of the German nation, they were happy and healthy and contented human beings. They were brought to this German soil from Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Belgium, France. They were driven and starved and beaten to slake that unholy thirst of the German war machine. When possessed no longer of the will or ability to work or fight back or live, they were

either tortured to death or permitted to slowly die. What you witness and are a part of in Hagenow today is but a single small example of what can be seen throughout the length and depth of your German Fatherland. Untold numbers of other Allied soldiers and German citizens shudder before similar burial services as you shudder now.

The Allies shudder because they never dreamed or visualized that human leadership supported by the masses could so debase itself as to be responsible for results like those who lie in these open graves. You Germans shudder for reasons of your own. Some of you, having been a party to this degradation of mankind, shudder for fear that your guilt will be determined, as in fact it will. Others among you shudder because you let depravity of this character develop while you stood still. The civilized world shudders on finding that a part of its society has fallen so low. That world isn't content to believe that what we are horrified about was the work of any small group of German gangsters, maniacs and fanatics. That world must, as it does, hold the German people responsible for what has taken place within the confines of this nation. Time will prove to what extent the German people recognize the enormity of their crimes and to what extent they will shoulder a full national responsibility for making amends. That any future conduct can eradicate the knowledge and memories of a service like this is a matter in high dispute. If there be a soul within the German nation, it will rise now to make impossible the doing of such future wrongs. If there be not a soul in this German nation, its future is forlorn and totally lacking in hope.

The bodies in these graves came yesterday from Wöbbelin. They were either buried there in a common grave or lay piled high on the open earth. Bodies from Wöbbelin will be buried in Ludwigslust and Schwerin as they are being buried here under the sight of God and true words consecrated by the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths. In death these bodies are receiving from Allied Christian hands the decent, humanitarian, and spiritual treatment they didn't receive in life from German hands. As we listen, Allies and Germans alike, let us ask for an understanding which Germany must find if she is to have a future life.

In a service last Sunday, held in the German Cathedral in Wismar, two thousand Allied soldiers — the same who had helped beat down and crush your military machine — spoke a prayer aloud that drifted into your German skies — God's skies. "Pray," they said, "for the German people, that they may be rid

of the burden of false teaching and one day take their place again among honorable peoples."

Introduction and statement, in: Mahn- und Gedenkstätten Wöbbelin (Hrsg.): "*Nachdruck der Originalrede vom Mai 1945*" (Reprint of the original statement), Schwerin o.Jg.