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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.

### A Bunker for Nothing

Resume of Dangerous Places: A monstrosity of a building in the shadow of Schöneberg's *Sozialpalast* ('Social Palace'), built by forced labor starting in 1943. BY ANNE FRANÇOISE WEBER

Big, brown and ugly, that's what the aboveground bunker on Pallas Street in Schöneberg is. Its unsightly bulk is now surrounded by Berlin's »*Sozialpalast*« - an architectural misdeed of the seventies, which even has an overpass crossing the street. Here the *Sportpalast* ('Sport Palace') once stood, where Joseph Goebbels cried out in February 1943: »Do you want total war?«. Six months later, construction began on the bunker, built by several hundred Soviet forced laborers. They were quartered in the neighboring Augusta School, after its students had been sent to Cottbus in the summer of 1943, under the program *Kinderlandverschickung* ('Sending Children to the Countryside', i.e., to protect them from air raids on the cities).

Among the forced laborers was Wassilij Derewjanko from the Ukraine. Now 72, he has returned to Berlin for a visit. Leaning on his cane, he walks across the school grounds and through the bunker. He tells how he came to Germany's capital with his parents and two sisters in 1943. He escaped the first raid on his village in the East Ukraine, but was later captured and sent through different camps to Berlin. Twenty or thirty people were quartered in each school room at the Augusta School, and they had to wear the »*Ost*« ("East") badge on their clothes. They had to work at least 12 hours a day on the bunker. The bunker was four stories high, and remained bare brickwork until 1945. It was originally meant to house the *Reichsfernmeldeamt* (Bureau of Telecommunications), which was then located on Winterfeldt Street. At night the forced laborers often had to seek shelter here during air raids. Later on, Germans had to do likewise. They got the lower, more secure levels, while the forced laborers had to take the upper rooms. In February 1945, an air bomb hit the school, and many prisoners were killed.

Derewjanko would rather not talk about the bomb attacks or the extreme hunger. Sometimes he went to Nollendorf Square to earn a little money or bread by carrying baggage for women. His family survived, and they were sent out of Berlin in April 1945. When the city was surrounded,

they were free to go.

The contact with the Augusta School, renamed Sophie Scholl High School after 1945, began with a letter from Derewjanko's sister in 1994, asking for written confirmation of their internment and forced labor. In the mean time, the Derewjankos have been to Berlin several times. Trying not to offend their hosts, they are careful when speaking about their experiences during internment. No, Derewjanko says, the head of his work group - Alex was his name - wasn't a bad man; he never beat him. Then with a smile, the old man says: »And that's how Wassilij built a bunker no one knows what to do with today.

The monstrous building has not been completely unused. After the war, the allies practiced setting demolition explosives there. It's not sure if they actually wanted to destroy the building, but at any rate they did not succeed in doing so. The Allies later ordered the administration to convert the bunker into a shelter for use in catastrophes. It was supposed to hold 5000 people. At the beginning of the 90's, supplies for an emergency medical center were stored there. Stacked in the lower rooms are cartons with suction drainers from 1968, or "night shirts with back fasteners" from 1983. On the top floor there are over 100 pale yellow hospital beds, covered with plastic and set out in rows. The military put them there after the last Oder flood – in the same rooms where the Red Army freed the last camp inmates in 1945. From the Ukraine alone, the Germans brought more than 2.4 million people to Western Europe for forced labor; more than half of them were women between 17 and 22 years of age. After 1943, almost exclusively families were deported. About 1000 small, medium-sized and large companies were using forced labor in Berlin. In the Lichtenberg district, the local history museum has now located the remains of 20 camps that were used to quarter families. In all of Berlin there are only five memorial plaques commemorating forced laborers, and one of them is hanging in the Sophie Scholl High School.

In the mean time, Wassilij Derewjanko and his sister Maria have received a written confirmation of their forced labor. This allowed them to apply for financial aid from the Ukrainian foundation "Understanding and Forgiveness". The foundation was started in 1994, after Chancellor Helmut Kohl promised Russian President Boris Yeltsin one million Deutsch Marks for especially needy victims of National Socialism in Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine. (In the debate on reparations for forced laborers, German companies originally asked that this sum be factored into calculations.) Though these countries did receive the money, the victims actually saw very little of it. The Ukrainian foundation is well known for trying to scare off applicants for aid. The elderly are treated in a very unfriendly manner, according to Derewjanko's niece Tatjana. Foundation officials continually ask for new documents, in certified translation, and payments are delayed.

Only since 1990 has discussion on forced labor become more open in the Ukraine. Before, people refused to talk for fear of being accused of having collaborated with the Germans. Just after the war, many who returned were sentenced to prison labor. Today, Derewjanko and his sisters are treated as war veterans, receiving a pension (about 30 Marks a month) and price reductions on electric bills or bus tickets. They heard in the media that more money might again come from Germany.

But even if the money does come in the near future, it is not certain that the Derewjankos will ever receive any of it. This is because the distribution is in the hands of each country's local foundation; in the Ukraine this is the foundation "Understanding and Forgiveness". Also, no German government office is willing to take on the job of helping applicants gather the necessary documentation. »It's the small, voluntary organizations that end up doing all the work«, complains historian Uta Gerlant of the Memorial Sponsor Group. Even the International Search

Organization in Bad Arolsen only gives information on deportees that are already listed in its own files. No further research is done.

The bunker on Pallas Street was built under the direction of the Philip Holzmann Company. When Bodo Förster, a teacher at the Sophie Scholl School, first contacted them for his 'new friends from the Ukraine', he was initially turned away. Later a meeting did take place, and the company contributed - 1000 Marks. Förster sees this as a positive trend, and says: "A thousand Marks is a lot for Philip Holzmann at this time. And that was certainly not the last payment."

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