

The 68th Anniversary of the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp.
“We need a welt, filled with confidence.”

Sunday, April 14th 2013, the yearly commemoration at the Buchenwald Memorial Site took place. At the former “Appel Platz”, a memorial service was kept, organized by the International Buchenwald-Dora and Kommandos Committee, remembering the dead comrades.

We had a sunny day, when we arrived at the memorial site. The typical wet and cold April weather kept away and gave us a nice day. As a member of the Jonastal Association, together with my husband Douglas Dillard, I participated at the ceremony.

Mr. Bertrand Herz, President of the International Buchenwald-Dora and Kommandos Committee, opened the ceremony with a speech. He reminded us of the many dead comrades, with a special focus on Stephane Hessel, resistance fighter and defender of human rights. He survived Buchenwald, became a diplomat, a lyric and a political activist.

Michael Kogon remembered his father Eugen Kogon, who had also been imprisoned in Buchenwald. Eugen Kogon was the son of of a Jewish-Russian diplomat and published in 1946 his book the “The SS State – System of the German concentration camps”. This book is considered until this day as a “must read” about the crimes, committed by the Nazis. The book has been translated into several languages and sold over 500,000 times in Germany alone.

He reminded us that the memories of his father are connected to those of the other survivors. He spoke about the contact between his father and Stephane Hessel in the camp. Michael also mentioned the courage of the inmates, risking their lives to save others and how important it was to trust one another. Today, we live in a world, where trust lacks and we so need a world with trust.

His father committed himself for a return of moral in politics, for a new world with peace and freedom. The oath of Buchenwald was always present in his thoughts and acts. The speck by Michael Kogon really impressed me. We exchanged some words and I thanked him.

My husband and I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Allan Kalisch and his family. He survived several camps, among them Buchenwald and S III. He was 17 years old. His memories regarding the S III camp are not as good as they once were. He and his friends were housed in Bunkers. There wasn't enough to eat and many were sick. Allan Kalisch had to break out stones out of old streets and load onto lorries. This hard work weakened him and he became ill.

Just before the US Army arrived, the SS transported him and other sick inmates with a truck to the Buchenwald main camp. Here, he witnessed the liberation. Mr. Kalish became an engineer and currently resides in Florida, USA. The meeting was very hearty and I believe, we encountered a new friend. At the end of the ceremony we remembered the victims and honored them with flowers, wreaths, marked stones and plaques.

Between 1937 and the end of the war, more than 250,000 people from 36 countries in Europe, where transported to the Buchenwald concentration camp. The camp was the largest of its kind by the end of the war. 56,000 people died in this camp. Several thousands of inmates were sent on the death marches, just before the end of the war. Thousands died...

On April 11th, 1945 soldiers of the Third US Army had reached the gates of the camp near Weimar. They discovered around 21,000 inmates, still alive. Among them, many children and teenagers. The US Army obliged the citizen of Weimar to go to the camp site and confronted them with the horrors of the Nazi tyranny. During Soviet occupation, the camp was continued until 1950 as a special camp. The history of the camp site is maintained by several exhibitions, where both camps are documented.

The former concentration camp Buchenwald, which is now a memorial site, recorded the names and date of around 38,000 victims in a book and on the Internet. Every year, Buchenwald receives up to 600,000 visitors.

Ute Dillard 15.4. 2013